

Isele Spirituality Workbook

The Ancestral Wisdom of the
Ifa Orisa Tradition

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to the ones who search for the wisdom of their ancestors and seek out elevation , healing, and enlightenment. To the children of cotton in America. To the children of Olokun whose ancestors traveled through the belly of the Atlantic Ocean to arrive in New Worlds. It is dedicated to my physical and spiritual descendants.

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Yeye Fayomi Falade Aworeni

Olori Abiye Osunbunmi

Faniyi Fasola Babatunde

Babalola Akinolola

Fategbe Kekereje Fasola (Awo Dino)

Falokun Fatunmbi

Olatunji Somorin

Luisah Teish

Olayemi Balorinwa

Aina Olomo (Iba Aye)

Preface

It was 1992 when I first sat with a Babalawo who indicated this was my path. I was open, but hesitant. It wasn't that I didn't see the value of the tradition. It wasn't that I didn't understand that these ancient concepts had relevance in my life and could be transformative. It was the people. It was the behavior I witnessed in relationship to others. It was clear to me that although our ancient traditions survived through the slave trade, through colonialism, through the onslaught of Abrahamic religions, that it wasn't without impact. Through it all, some core concepts became minimized and others became the focus. Over time the tradition became focused in material wealth, power, protocols, control, organized ritual, dogma. Its spiritual essence embedded in the core tenants were replaced by religious ones, political ideologies, lineage cliques and personal agendas. This was a huge turn off to me.. because somewhere deep in my soul, I "remembered" a more serene path in this tradition. One that focused on spiritual awakening and cultivation. One that could affect transformational healing. One that had the potential to elevate the soul to actually become an Orisa as opposed to just worshiping them.

This work will not be appreciated by all. Some of it will go against some fundamental approaches that in my opinion...simply are not working.. It is not enough to spout tradition. Or this is the way it has been done... Or this is truth because this person said so. Or this is how such and such does it. It is necessary to produce actual results of that work. You know a tree by the fruit it bares and the whole purpose of walking the

path of Ifa is to actually develop and grow. Development and growth involves inner work and self analysis. The ability to memorize numerous verses, the ability to know every step in a dance, or word in a song, or speak Yoruba fluently is not an indication of spiritual mastery or development. The ability to dream or be psychic or attaining a great knowledge of herbs and magic, know perfect protocol, or many years of involvement is also not spiritual maturity. These are all skills... and areas of benefit but none of it is an indication of honor, integrity, or character. Too often, these have been the values that have been practiced by many practitioners. One's value was in how long they practiced as opposed to how they conducted themselves or their attitude. Or the perception that because one is a beginner in the formal tradition, they are a beginner in spiritual development. A person is judged based on their lineage and not their actual behaviors or works. Or a person is judged based on their race, nationality, sex, or who they have sex with rather than the level of wisdom they may have. They are judged by their body and not their Ori. All of these things produce a blind approach lacking depth and real growth in favor of what is popular and brand name Babas.

There is a need to return to the core values established in the tradition... based on truth.. and not ideologies. There is a need for a more definitive spiritual approach rather than religious dogma. There is a need for more tools for development rather than admonitions to be of good character. This book is not intended to be the ultimate in Ifa nor is it intended to be filled lots of platitudes. It is intended to be a workbook... with key emphasis on work...as in self work. While I seek to give the beginner introductory information about the tradition at large and approaches, I also want to offer practical information for the

beginner in terms of tools for actual development in this tradition.

Rather than talk about character, I want to offer support in building it. Rather than talk of healing, I want to offer specific tools for healing. Some of the exercises and tools will not be directly what I learned in Ifa. Some will be things I learned that just works... and it supports the work in Ifa. I am not so much a purist anymore.. I am more interested in what works... what helps... and what I have found to be effective through actual practice.

I contend that Ifa was, Is, and will be tomorrow... But Ifa as we know it, grows also and changes according to the needs of the time and people practicing. Ifa is said to date back 10,000 years. We can be sure that what is practiced today is not that of 10,000 years ago. We saw through the transatlantic slave trade a number of people come together from various ethnic groups, and traditions... not just Yoruba to maintain the ancestral traditions of Africa by any means necessary. Coming away from the motherland of Africa forced them to adapt to new land, new herbs, trees, and even approaches that were more suitable for their new home. Over time, new approaches and some new protocols developed to address situations that were not the case when on the continent. People were inspired to write new songs, dances, clothing for the tradition to be relevant and to survive the harsh conditions. Essentially, though many will deny it emphatically, some things were “made up” through the ingenuity and creativity of our ancestors to support our new lives in the Americas. One thing we diasporans bring is a spiritual of adaptability and creativity.

What's more is that even on the continent, we find that things

are not set in stone and so rigid when it comes to how things are done. Each town, lineage, family has its own practices and even Ifa corpus. What is done in one town may not be done in another. What one priest establishes as “right”, another may do entirely different... All are considered “ authentic” though all may be different. This reflects a great deal of tolerance for differences and adaptability on the continent as well.

Further, with the advent of Islam and Christianity, Ifa found its Odu corpus adding new ese that reflect that new environment. While it's disconcerting to some.. and understandably so it is what it is. So purist would have it all eliminated... and some...rightfully so.. But there are some core truths that transcend the moment's message.. and there is a need to find balance and patience with these things... To suppose that Love and forgiveness is equivalent to Christianity and therefore should be thrown out is a reckless approach and demonstrates a lack of true understanding of spiritual values beyond politics. Ifa was founded on Ile Ife... the spiritual center said to be where Orisa first touched the Earth. It loosely translates to land or Place of Love. I contend that love is at the very center of the tradition...Not a colonized concept brought in by outsiders. Likewise concepts such as peace is not an idea brought in by Islam, but Suuru is an ideal that dates back to ancient times. Ideas such as Divine self is not an idea that came from New Age teachings... The Ori reflects this concepts more fully and comprehensively than any New Age book.

It is with this understanding that I move forward with this work to reclaim and reinforce timeless spiritual principles for humanity... Not just black people or Ifa practitioners. I offer a view of the basics of the tradition merged with applying workable

methods for whether or not a person is in a formal ile or community. I invite those who read through to take it all in.. and what works for you embrace it. What does not, leave it be.. But understand that this is a lifetime journey... full of change and growth.. Some things can only be attained over time bit by bit. It can be one of transformation and healing if we let it.. If we are willing to do not so much the outer work.. but the inner work of self mastery .

Lastly, this book is written with African Diasporans in mind. That is not to take away from any other lineage or introduction to the tradition. Other lineages such as Lucumi, Candomble, Spiritual Baptist may have their own way to introduce the tradition to people in those countries and cultures. African Diaspora can apply to all of those as well. What I mean by African Diasporans are those of African descent, particularly African Americans who are embracing West African lineages. African Americans are coming to Isese with their own ancestral heritage and nuances just as every other lineage has. Too often, the search to be as “Yoruba” as they can be overlooks their other ancestral lineages. They end up seeking validation from people who are not African Americans in how they practice. One of the Ase’s of African Diasporans is that they are genetic melting pot of Africa and sometimes the Americas. African Americans and African Diaspora as a whole comprise of more than Yoruba. Beni, Fon, Igbo, Mende, Akan, Congo and many sub ethnic groups are what their ancestors were and to ignore them is disrespectful to their legacy and actually contrary to honoring your ancestral legacy.

In trying to be pure Yoruba, they end up being a poor imitation never quite fitting in or being accepted and giving all of their power and money away to yet another culture and people while dismissing their own. This has never been healthy nor has

it ever boded well for them. It is with this in mind that I incorporate things that may support their approach to Isese by incorporating some information about other ethnic groups that are also a part of their ancestral heritage and Ifa. In addition, I add tools and practices that help to practice better in the diaspora and with an eye of inclusion of their more recent ancestors as well.

Notwithstanding, this book is not exclusive to African Diasporans but designed to empower anyone who is interested in learning about the tradition of Ifa Orisa and may want to begin practicing it as a non initiate. It is designed to support those without an elder or until an adequate one can be found. Its intended to be a beginning point, not a final point.

THE JOURNEY TO ISESE

Ogunda Ose

E baa lo loo lo bi olo
E baa re ree re bi ere
Ibi ti e ti lo naa
Le o pada si
Dia fun Ojola
Omo Ere L'apa
E ma ma paa o
Eran ab'obun ni o
e ye e ma p'Ojola
Omo Ere L'apa
Ifa ni Isese lo amm leke
Isese lo maa gbeniyan

No matter how far you wander like the grindstone
No matter how far you wind like the boa constrictor
It is your starting point
to which you shall all return
These were the declarations of Ifa to the royal python
the offspring of the boa constrictor of Apa town
Pray, do not slay it
Do not slay the royal python
The offspring of the boa constrictor of Apa town
Ifa says Isese (our traditions) will prevail
Isese will allow mankind to prevail

Chapter 1

Isele Lagba:

The Tradition of the Ancients

“Where are your people from?” Is a question African Americans often pose to each other to get an idea about who they are. Your background could tell a story about your character, your family values, your attitudes. It may also let people know about potential unknown relationships of lost family members. That question may draw a response like “Tennessee, Mississippi, Louisiana” or any other Southern state in the United States. But it also may draw another reference... Africa.. and more specifically Central or West Africa.

So much was lost in the Trans Atlantic Slave trade that recovering it is a journey itself. At one time, it would have been impossible for our New World ancestors to reclaim anything forgotten . What they remembered is what they took with them and brought to the new world. They passed what was remembered down to the next generation and so on. With the passing of time, the forcing of Abrahamic religion on those held

captive, being on a new land and the merging with other ethnicities, many adaptations occurred not just in America but with those taken worldwide.

They planted roots in South America, Central America, and North America to become the African Diaspora Spiritual traditions. They may be called, Candomble, Spiritual Baptist, Lucumi, Garifuna, Vodoo, Espiritismo, or Hoodoo . They are all branches from a common tree found on the African Continent.

The journey was not an easy one and not without tragedy and struggle. Trauma, generational and first hand is still evident today. Millions suffered and died in the struggle; and millions more survived. Finally, after hundreds of years, African descendants, with the wisdom gained from our journey in the New World, made our way back to the Motherland to reclaim what was forgotten. They returned to West Africa in the former Guinea region, now called Nigeria, Benin, And Ghana. They were welcomed by their distant family back home. It became a salve to soothe the trauma and pain. What was found was a vibrant stream of multiple bodies of knowledge connecting our ancient past to our current walks.

It wasn't one homogenous religion seeking to dominate. Rather, it was a many family or local village practices that could vary from location and within sub ethnic groups. They did however share common themes and expressions. Under the diaspora ideal, the need for one religious approach to dominate and be considered the most authentic seemed to be from exposure in the Abrahamic evangelical approaches.

On the African continent, it was much more of a system of

understanding beyond strict religious rules. It was a system that united many streams into a singular paradigm or approach to spirituality through Our relationship with nature and ancestors. It also became a means through which to move forward again. It is this path of nature found that can help to realign us with the Earth and heal down to the DNA. The system awakens forces known as Orisa and primordial beings of light known as Irunmole. Some call it Orisa or Ocha. Some came to call it Ifa to represent the common oracle they all use. The traditional knowledge system for Ifa Orisa Ancestral spirituality in Yorubaland is known as **Isese**.

Isese (pronounced Eee-shay-shay) refers to tradition. Lagba refers to elders or ancients . That is, the ancestral traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation. It is the lessons and wisdom passed down from our mothers and fathers. It is the ancestral memory that holds the collective lessons of African people. These lessons, we carry in our DNA back to time immemorial. It is the stories and legends that remind us of our journey and nudge us toward our future. For the purpose of this book, Isese reminds us of our timeless wisdom passed orally. Until recently, these traditions were still primarily oral and passed through biological or spiritual families. Unlike conventional religions, it remained fairly fluid and adaptable as new developments occurred. It is a living tradition that continues to evolve even when faced with the emergence of new religions, politics, and African Diasporian variations.

Isese is not just the remembrance of the ancient past but also the path of those before who paved the way to be where we are now. One of the ways the African traditions has been preserved is through the Odu Ifa Literary Corpus. This is a collection of oral

teaching, wisdom, proverbs, stories, that have been passed down for thousands of years. The Odu Ifa Literary Corpus is catalogued into 256 main sections. Its one way the African ancestors sought to preserve valuable indigenous knowledge and ancestral science. Some of these teachings are very ancient. Others are more recent dating a couple of hundred years. In any case, these oral teachings become the foundation for the Ifa Orisa spiritual tradition that we practice today. It acts as a direct reference to our ancestor's values and ideals.

While still primarily oral, its teachings have begun to be written down in the 20th Century so that they may be preserved for future generations. The advent of Arab and European colonialism in Africa, the transatlantic slave trade, the promotion of foreign religions in Africa, the separation of lands, languages, and ethnic groups by European influences, all make it necessary to preserve what is left. It is part of the legacy of Ancient African people and a small part of our ancestral traditions.

Isese is not just that however. Isese is ones connections to one's own family line such as mother and father, grandparents, etc. African traditions did not stop in Africa. The people transported through the transatlantic slave trade preserved those ancient legacies in numerous ways...From disguising the tradition under the guise of Catholicism, to continuing the teaching of nature sciences through hoodoo, to African American proverbs and colloquialisms, to cooking to music, art, and even language, our ancestral traditions continue in the most creative and unique ways. In addition, those African people made modifications that allowed them to continue on this land. Those in the Diaspora found new herbs on the new lands they found themselves on. They developed new relationships with indigenous people on

those new lands. What I am trying to say is that the traditions of African people did not stop in Africa. African people in the diaspora continued and the traditions that developed in the Diaspora are also a part of our Isese. For Africans in the diaspora who began to embrace Isese, it was embraced beyond Yorubaland and its 300 or more sub-ethnicities, but also neighboring ethnicities like Fon, Ewe, Igbo, who also shared the use of Ifa. While tradition calls us to be reminded of our ancestral ways, tradition doesn't mean stagnation.

Isese is also one's spiritual lineage... that is..the lineage of our soul. That means our divine self that lived before, during, and after this lifetime. This tradition of incarnation in and out of lifetimes also continues what came before. Our ancestors understood that what we did before sets the tone for what we shall or need to do for our future... That future is our destiny... That destiny is determined by what came before.....

It is with this in mind, that we understand Isese is our ancestral spiritual traditions that guide and support our lives. That it is the path of the ancient ones that cry out from our ancestor's graves... It is also the guide post for future choices, decisions, and paths. May we learn from the past to know what to do for the future.

Today, the world is very imbalanced. People are imbalanced. There is a lack of harmony with each other, with nature, and with the divine itself. For those that came through the slave trade, Isese fulfills a special need.. The need to heal and reconnect to ancestral roots that have been severely severed. The disconnect has impacted the bloodlines to the core DNA. Research shows that when a person experiences a trauma, that trauma can influence the very structure of the DNA. Ifa spirituality also

holds that we impact and are impacted by 16 generations forward and behind. Because our ancestors experienced not one, but generational trauma over hundreds of years, we hold genetic memory that continues to impact our bodies, thoughts, emotions, and attitudes. Given the average Diasporian has a family member who was stolen and sold into bondage, the genealogical, physiological, sociological, psychological impact of human captivity continues to take its toll through the generations.

Isele may help in some of that healing as those parts of us that were severed are now reconnecting. The ancestral memory can begin its healing process and the medicine from Isele can facilitate a settling of spirit. The emphasis on ancestral connections allows us to address generational wounds and heal dysfunctional family patterns as well as psychological habits that are not in our best interest. This is one of the underlying true values of Isele. It is not just another religion... It is a bridge to healing the past and future.

Owonrin Ogunda on What is Isele

These were the declarations of Ifa to Isele (Our traditions)

They asked, what is ones Ìṣeṣe?

Olódùmarè is ones Ìṣeṣe

It is Ìṣeṣe we ought to appease

Before appeasing any Ọrìṣà, Ìṣeṣe

Ones Orí (Destiny) is ones Ìṣeṣe

It is Ìṣeṣe we ought to appease

Before appeasing any Ọrìṣà, Ìṣeṣe

Ones Ikin Ifá (ones personal Odù) is ones Ìṣeṣe

*It is Ìṣeṣe we ought to appease
Before appeasing any Ọrìṣà, Ìṣeṣe*

*Ìlẹ̀ Aiyé (Mother Earth/Nature) is ones Ìṣeṣe
It is Ìṣeṣe we ought to appease
Before appeasing any Ọrìṣà, Ìṣeṣe*

*Ones own Mother is ones Ìṣeṣe
It is Ìṣeṣe we ought to appease
Before appeasing any Ọrìṣà, Ìṣeṣe*

*Ones own Father is ones Ìṣeṣe
It is Ìṣeṣe we ought to appease
Before appeasing any Ọrìṣà, Ìṣeṣe*

*Vagina (the mothers ancestral portal through which we come
through) is ones Ìṣeṣe
It is Ìṣeṣe we ought to appease
Before appeasing any Ọrìṣà, Ìṣeṣe*

*Penis (Fathers ancestral line through which we come
through) is ones Ìṣeṣe
It is Ìṣeṣe we ought to appease
Before appeasing any Ọrìṣà, Ìṣeṣe*

*One's Olúwo ("Elder Priest") is ones Ìṣeṣe
It is Ìṣeṣe we ought to appease
Before appeasing any Ọrìṣà, Ìṣeṣe*

*Please let us appease Ìṣeṣe
Before appeasing any Ọrìṣà
Ìṣeṣe is the Progenitor of all ètùtù (appeasements)*

The previous verse is from the Ifa Literary corpus... the Oral Wisdom tradition. It is one of tens of thousands of verses. This particular one describes Isele. It identifies Isele as the traditions of our progenitors. It begins by saying that before one can appease Orisa, one needs to appease one's Ori. Orisa can do nothing without the Ori. Orisa are forces of nature that are often personified into archetypal and ascended ancestral expressions.

We will discuss Orisa in a later chapter but, for beginners, it is important to know because many people discover Orisa on the internet and immediately begin focusing on that because of their appeal and popularity. They may find an Orisa that they identify with and immediately begin setting up altars and compiling whatever they can find about that Orisa from the internet to practice. This is an inappropriate approach because it doesn't work that way. This system is a science and there is a purpose to doing everything. Most often, the danger is awakening spiritual forces without a clue as to if this is for you. Sometimes the wrong practice can result in years or a lifetime of setback.

Isele begins with the acknowledgement of Olodumare. Olodumare is the spiritual source from which all other things come. Anything in the manifest or unmanifest world seen and unseen is rooted in Olodumare. Olodumare may be considered the divine spark of consciousness that perpetuates all life. However you view the the most high, Olodumare is that. We identify first with that because it gives us understanding of who and what we really are. That is we are light beings.

As beings of light, we are personified into human form for a time. Through the process of **atunwa** or reincarnation, we make several journey's back into human form experiencing lifetimes over and again. Because of that, we can forget whom we truly are and identify with our human condition more than our spiritual essence. So by identifying first with Olodumare, we are reminded of not only our source but the connection of all to that same source. Olodumare is the first progenitor of our existence.

Olodumare, however is not called upon for every human need. The Ifa verse Iwori Osa explains a time when everyone was coming to Olodumare begging to be saved. Olodumare responded that we were given everything we need to excel on the planet. But... "those whom I have given ability do not use their ability. Those that have been given wisdom do not use the wisdom that I have given them." So there is no need to continue to call for answers and saving when we have the tools to answer them. So Olodumare cast a cloth over the world so people would be forced to learn how to use the gifts and resources they were given.

As an extension of Olodumare is our Ori. Our Ori is our divine self that is always connected to source. The Ori is an individualized spark of consciousness that is emitted from Olodumare . So, it is of utmost importance to be in alignment with it. Ones Ori, as we will discover in the Ori chapter, knows your destiny...It is your personal deity. As your personal deity , it begins the identity as an individual because its work is tied to the life you live. It is not, however the personality or persona. That is still expressed through the body.

Rather, the Ori is the aspect that holds the blueprint for our lives on Earth. While the ultimate purpose of humanity is to ascend or transcend the limitations of Earth, we learn and grow through lifetimes. It is the Ori that will identify which Orisa or forces of nature you may need to do the work with this lifetime to be balanced and whole. The Ori knows the lessons and soul purpose you have this lifetime and thus it knows what Orisa you need...not just want.

For example, If a person who is here to learn lessons through Yemoja in being cool and receptive decided they like Ogun , a hot and aggressive Orisa , and they focused on that, they would create many painful issues in their life because it is not in alignment with what they are here for and they are working against themselves instead of for their growth.

So it is suggested that any beginner start with Ori first. This gives you an opportunity to know the big picture for your life... not just a whimsical way to worship something new. The Ori and path to your destiny can be learned through Ifa. Ifa has the tools and rituals necessary to uncover the mystery and put you into alignment with your soul path. Ifa is identified through its sacred tools called ikin. So this linen in the verse is referring to the specific path you are called to as identified by the Ikin oracle.

The Odu next acknowledges Ile Aye. This is a name for Mother Earth or Mother Nature. Another name is Onile. Onile is the mother to all on this planet. It is she who hosts us and allow us the opportunity to learn and grow here. Our bodies are made of the organic materials found on the Earth. Since

Orisa are forces of nature, Onile is the mother of all Orisa. The Earth is sacred ground and it bears witness to anything that happens on the planet and anything we do.

Too many are disconnected from nature and see nature as a thing rather than a living consciousness. But the Earth acts as both a womb and a tomb. One is to bring life into the world. She gives us all to sustain ourselves here as well. And she also acts as a repository for those who die returning them back to the dust from which they came. As Isese practitioners, it is our sacred duty to care for and honor the Earth.

The verse goes on to reference your mother and father and the reproductive organs. This speaks to the wisdom passed through the generations and your ancestral heritage. This is why it is also encouraged for beginners to learn to honor their ancestors. The ancestors are considered ones first line of support in the spiritual realm. Each step assists with the next steps. If you don't know how to recognize the voices and patterns of your ancestors, you wont be able to do so with Orisa. Even at their core, some Orisa are ascended ancestors.

The ancestral journey is the most personal one. In the diaspora this becomes a most important theme to acknowledge because some people forget that ancestry starts with those most recently crossed over all the way back to the first ancestor. Because of this, when we reach back to learn our traditions from Africa, its important not to forget the ancestors who survived the middle passage and who helped us to survive and even thrive in the New World. We are the sum total of all who came before.

The verse continues by acknowledging ones Oluwo. This speaks to one's spiritual teacher or spiritual parent who helped birth you into the tradition. While people may learn in dreams and other forms, ones spiritual teachers are who will give you regular tangible guidance from day to day. These are those who spiritually feed you. Eldership is very important in this tradition. Eldership can take the form of age or it can take the form of experience and knowledge. An Oluwo is a senior priest recognized for their knowledge and experience. It is often referred to in the diaspora as the God parent. It may also be called Baba/Yeye Ifa or Iya/Baba Orisa. It may be appropriate because when one takes on a student or mentee, a spiritual family relationship begins. The mentor becomes a spiritual parent while the mentee becomes the omo...or spiritual son or daughter. The Godparent...or Oluwo is responsible for 'raising" you in the tradition into a spiritual adult. So the roles of parent is extended to include Oluwos.

We recognize that this is an oral tradition and you need an active elder to really be able to walk the path with knowing and confidence. Contrary to popular opinion... this is not a Youtube Self initiatory tradition. We still rely on apprentice mentor relationships as the primary mode of learning. A book , including this one may offer a beginning. The surface information may be known... Empowering information may be learned. But the tidbits of wisdom an elder may share can be the difference between success and failure.

An example Ill give is when I was looking through a book on Ewe... which is plant medicine. It had some recipes for doing certain works and everything appeared to be there. I was excited to share with my elder what I had found. He looked it

over and shook his head agreeing that it had the right recipe as he was taught. There was one part that was missing though. The book indicated that one needed to put a few leaves in the mouth as a part of the ritual. My elder explained that it was important that the leaves only be put on the lips and never the teeth. Allowing the teeth to touch the leaves would make the teeth break down and fall out! Anyone who tried to follow that work without knowing the nuances only an elder may know would cause great harm to themselves. This is why books or the internet will never replace the guidance of an experienced elder. This book is intended to be a beginning point for newcomers... and perhaps a deepening point for some... It is not intended to replace the direct guidance of an elder. It may supplement...but not replace. Elders tend to be the bridge between what was in the past and what is passed on in the future.

16 Core Values of Ifa

1. There is one unifying intelligent source that expresses as all things to all people and through all of creation seen and unseen. We call it Olodumare.
2. We are all endowed with personal power and choices and must take full responsibility for our own actions.
3. For every problem we encounter , there is a solution and that we have the power to effect positive change in our lives .
4. We each have a divine purpose and destiny, It is our responsibility to discover it and live in alignment with it in order to live our best life.
5. At our core, we are spiritual beings inhabiting human bodies. Our divinity is manifest through an indwelling intelligence (Ori) that is always connected to our source.
6. We do not die but continue as ancestors in the spiritual world and come back through reincarnation into our blood relatives.
7. We live in a spiritual universe that it is governed by universal laws that ensure divine order and balance.
8. Character directly impacts our destiny. We must each do the internal work to cultivate integrity and honorable character in our lives. There is no real gain, joy, or peace from wrong doing.
9. Spiritual technologies such as therapeutic ritual, Oracles,

innate spiritual gifts, initiation, and indigenous medicines can be used to heal, empower, receive guidance, support, and insight in and for our lives.

10. The universe is governed by primordial intelligences we call Irunmole and Orisa who manifest as light and forces of nature. Our bodies are made of the same substances and therefore always connected.

11. Earth is our Mother who provides all living beings food, water, clothing, medicine, shelter, and substance our entire lives. We are custodians of the Earth and must respect the laws of nature.

12. Good fortune in life can be attained through Ebo. We must give up something of lesser value for something of greater value.

13. The spiritual world and physical world are interconnected and interdependent . Nothing comes through the physical world without coming first through the spiritual.

14. We are the sum total of our ancestors who came before and continue our relationships with them in the spiritual world. world through our ancestors and (Egbe) spiritual mates.

15. The world is abundant and should be lived with joy and free of fear.

16. Women must be respected. The only way we come to Earth is through women.

4. What would it mean for you to learn the traditional practices of African Ancestors?

Embracing the wisdom from your family

African Wisdom is often passed down through proverbs, colloquial wisdom, and clever sayings in the family. Some in the African American community may be :

- Jumping out of the frying pan and into the fire.
- No pot to piss in or a window to throw it out of.
- What is good for the goose, is good for the gander.
- Birds of a feather, flock together.
- Haste makes waste

These colloquialisms are common proverbs that may be passed from generation to generation. Often they are how some

ancestral wisdom is passed.

5. What Africanisms, Colloquialisms, habits, proverbs, attitudes are you aware of in your own experience that may have been passed down in your family?

Personal Ritual to Open the Way to your Journey

As in any journey in traditional African Spirituality, we begin with prayer and calling for the progenitors of your line to support your healing journey. To do that we are going to call on the spirit of the crossroads. This spirit is called by many names from Papa Legba to Elegba, to St. Peter to what we call Esu (pronounced Eh Shoo) in Isese. Esu is an Orisa that is considered the opener of the way and messenger between heaven and Earth. Esu dwells at any 4 way crossroad. We choose to call Esu first so that we can bless the journey forward as you learn more.

To do that you will need some simple easy to find items.

- ❖ Popcorn
- ❖ A small bottle of gin, rum, or cola soda if you are too young to purchase alcohol.
- ❖ A coconut or some pieces of coconut

Take these items to a 4 way crossroad area at the park, a quiet street, or wooded area.

Walk in a counter clockwise circle 3 times and place the items on the ground.

Say the following prayer

Elegbara, Esu Odara, Esu Lalu 3x

Divine Spirit of the Crossroads

Messenger between heaven and Earth

I am —— (state you're name) child of ——(state your mother's full maiden name) , born——(date of birth.

I call on you today to ask for your support on my Journey to Isese. Open the way for me.

Help me to tap the wisdom of my ancestors and gain

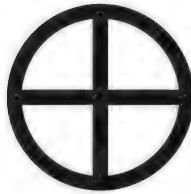
alignment with my Ori.

Let me be guided to the right teachers, the right understanding, and the right path for me.

Protect me from confusion and any negativity. While I do not know the proper way yet, I offer these items humbly to you so that you may open the way for me to learn . Modupe and Ase.

Walk again in a circle around the offerings and walk away.

If you cannot find a crossroad area suitable for this ritual , you may draw a circle and a cross in dirt or inside with chalk and place the items in the middle. Then say the prayer and leave a white votive candle.



Chapter 2

Isese in the 21st Century and Core Beliefs

How a person approaches Isese is important to how they understand themselves. Different elders hold different view points in relation to Isese. It is not good or bad or right or wrong per say. Just that there are various views and approaches. It is important to understand that point because many have preconceived or limiting views on what is authentic and the idea of validity. Too much focus on that can create conflict and division where there should be unity and mutual respect.

Some believe that in order for it to be authentic, initiations must be done in Africa and one must have elders that are born in Yorubaland. They seek to recapture the Yoruba way as much as possible. This includes adopting cultural mores, practices, and world views. For some, it means seeking to live as close as possibly to the way the Yoruba ancients lived. Or,

live as closely as possible how Yoruba people in traditional culture live today. This means learning to speak fluid Yoruba, dressing the part, cooking and adopting the same world view, etc. The Ifa corpus is approached as an inerrant sacred literary corpus. In this way, it is perceived that we may recapture what was lost. This means that a great deal of time and money is spent going to Africa and learning in Africa from Africans.

Other practitioners embrace Diaspora elders because of cultural familiarity and proximity. Financial limitations, work and family dynamics often make it impossible to finance such trips and stay for extended periods of time. Many in the Diaspora also find themselves in the 21st century and recognizing their ancestors have now been on a different land for 7 or 8 generations. New cultures and new ethnic associations have emerged in that time that are often very different from conventional Yoruba culture present or ancient. The Ifa literary corpus is incorporated as a primary reference while understanding that culture and language can influence interpretation and translations. A metaphysical and or esoteric approach is often incorporated to create a widened understanding of universal principles that transcend any one place or culture. To that end, they continue to appreciate the recent ancestral ways while integrating the traditional Yoruba or African ways as well.

There are pros and cons with each approach. The fundamentalist Diaspora approach has a tendency to focus more on perfecting exact ritual and processes, memorization, and imitation. This may allow them to do it exactly as the Yoruba forefathers did it and perceives that as most authentic. There is merit in preservation of the ritual processes for sure.

Unfortunately, memorization of scriptures, nor recitations in another language have never been the keys to spiritual growth. The ritual is empty if you don't know what it means. While understanding some of the language and a new vocabulary is necessary to understand some aspects, spiritual growth will always be measured on what is on the inside and character vs outer displays of show.

Other Diaspora tend to be more adaptable recognizing that 13th century Yoruba is not really in sync with modern 21st century in the Americas. An example may be dress. In Oyo in 1350, it may have been perfectly acceptable for women to walk in public bare breasted. There are spiritual and religious implications of breasts that would have been impactful then. Today, as of January 2020 in the United States of America.. or even in modern day Yorubaland, that is no longer common. The culture changed. So examining the cultural dynamics, especially as it relates to tradition is important to understand especially when adopting a new religion.

The ancestors were, if nothing, practical .. not fanatical. They held the ability to adapt to the environment they were in along with the lands they found themselves on. It is this reason that a balanced approach must be reached in your journey to Isese and a healthy respect for those adaptation should be given as a recognition of how the tradition is able to survive and its timeless wisdom across culture. Ignoring the realities of environment will often prove to be extremely difficult , if not impossible.

Still, there is an adjustment that must be made for those embarking on the Isese path because culture inevitably cannot

be denied nor ignored either. Some European values that have been adopted have been to our detriment and undermined our self esteem, autonomy, as well as our ability to feel empowered. Isele has become a global religion in its ability to transcend this. Part of its unique feature is some of the cultural approaches that unify all of its practitioners across the globe.

Isele and Core Beliefs

It is here where we must examine our core beliefs as we embark on learning about this path as a tradition. Aina Olomo (Ibae) was a forerunner in Isele as it was practiced by African Americans in the diaspora. She was an Iyanifa and crowned the Kpojito which refers to Queen Mother in Dahomey of the Diaspora. In her book, *Core of Fire: A Path to Yoruba Spiritual Activism*, she shares the kinds of transitions many make as they embark upon practicing African Spiritual Traditions. She indicates the necessity of exploring core beliefs and emotional-psychological shifts that come up for new adherents in the tradition which she refers to as CBS (Core Belief System). Core beliefs are unconscious opinions we hold as true that we grow up with and adopt without even thinking about them. They are our personal mores and values. To be sure, some of them are to our benefit. Others are to our detriment. So it is necessary to discern these things as we move forward in reclaiming what was and embracing a new path.

The reason this is important to be explored is because it is impossible to ignore some inevitable transitions that are bound to occur when certain traditional cultural influences intersect with western world views. To that end, I would like to examine some topics where core beliefs may be challenged in order to

explore how you may need to adjust.

Language

The first thing we do when we are born is cry. We begin to find ways to communicate and express ourselves. Language becomes that tool and often our language may reflect our core belief, especially when confronted with primal instincts. Ifa is originally spoken and written in Yoruba. Because of the culture through which this tradition is expressed, you will need to learn a new vocabulary and language for many areas of your life. While you may never fully learn Yoruba, it is almost impossible to not have some orientation to the language and key words. This will show up first as it relates to greetings, names of people and processes, and common colloquial phrases used by practitioners. It's a matter of learning it bit by bit and not being discouraged by the slow process of learning.

Another consideration related to language is that Yoruba is a tonal language. Some written words that appear the same have multiple meanings. These differences are often distinguished by tonal marks and the context it is written.

There are also some words in Yoruba that have no English translation. Orisa is one such word. Many translate Orisa to be god . That is an inaccurate translation. It is usually filtered through the Abrahamic concept of the absolute and monotheism. The Yoruba language was first written down by missionaries in their creating a dictionary. As a result, they influenced translations through their core belief system and not a traditional Yoruba. The word Orisa itself actually has many layered meanings and cannot be summed up as god. While the

world view in Isese recognizes Olodumare as the divine source others call God, the understanding of divinity is not excluded from other divine beings having influence and impact of our lives.

Transitioning from Abrahamic Faiths

This brings up another aspect of our core belief system that must be addressed. That is how our perception of religion and faith shifts..Especially coming from an Abrahamic Faith.

The Orisa are the core basis of this tradition and their role is as governors for this world. When an issue arises, it is not likely to be Olodumare that we are seeking help. It is the primordials and Orisa. This requires a mind shift and calls for a process in which we develop faith in the system we have adopted.

So the concept of Orisa is influenced by our core belief regarding the Divine itself along with it being a word that has no Western literal translation.

The idea of a devil is another aspect of Abrahamic core beliefs that require change. The mistranslation came from missionaries projecting their Christian belief system on top of their own. This had far reaching implications up till date because those who were converted to Abrahamic faiths accepted the correlation without question as they were learning Western languages and religions. The truth is there NO devil in Isese-at all. There is no one we can place the blame on by default for our faults or poor character choices. Isese requires accountability and self responsibility for what happens in our lives. You will find that it is much more difficult to hide your

character in this tradition. The oracle will eventually reveal what you will not. It has a unique ability to bring for hidden motives and issues. This is because it's primary function is self development and personal growth.

This brings me to yet another aspect of core beliefs that require adjustment. That is ways of knowing . In the west, we are accustomed to learning and knowing from intellectual study or teaching alone. We examine the facts we are aware of and make a judgement. What we are not aware of, we don't factor in. In Isese however, the oracle becomes a primary verification method. That is sometimes a hard pill to swallow because from the outside, using an oracle to determine the view of a thing looks like you are giving your power away to a random object. Yet, we understand that oracles are indigenous knowledge systems that has proven itself to be able to go beyond intellectual knowledge for thousands of years. The oracle can tap both the collective unconscious , multidimensional worlds, as well as high sacred truths that are not clouded by human judgments. While we understand the interpretation may be impacted by culture and core beliefs, the pure wisdom that emerges from the Oracle itself is beyond doubt.

Money and Spirituality

If there is one thing that beginners are most challenged by is how they view money and spirituality. Abrahamic faiths give the impression of things being freely given. The idea of free is relative to the expectations whether financial or otherwise. Churches don't get built nor maintained by themselves. Regular tithes averaging 10% of your income are expected to support it. Out of that , the pastor or imam salary comes from it. Without it or enough, the church dies and the minister can

not survive in that capacity.

To further this point, let's examine how much 10% really is.

By the time you calculate say minimum wage \$8.00 hr at 10% that is 320.00 and the tithe should be \$32. For 1 year/52 weeks that's \$1664 a year... After 3 years of attending if you never got a raise, that is \$4992. Ten years in the church and you have paid \$16,640...at minimum wage, not including the secondary offerings, any potential raises or if you actually make more. So even, if it appears free, it is not. The core value is expressed as it is better to give than receive.

In Isese, the law of reciprocity applies. That is as you receive, also give. It is imbalance to take more than your give. This applies to the Earth itself. When mankind takes too much of the forest without planting enough trees, it causes an imbalance that puts everyone on the planet at risk. Doing so created a hole in the ozone layer...which caused the melting of the ice caps from global warming, which has created drastic weather changes, floods, tsunami and hurricanes which impact millions every year. All because of greed and mankind not wanting to give as much as it received. So reciprocity is a law of the Earth to ensure balance and wholeness in all situations.

Isese is very practical in its approach understanding that the world is a marketplace and that it cost money to make and prepare things. It takes time to be of service to another. These are not unlimited resources. So compensation is necessary so that those who are helping you are also being helped.

This can be in contrast for those who grew up expecting spiritual services for free. Many believe that if you were given

a spiritual gift, you should not charge for it. But spiritual gifts come in the form of talents in the arts, math, sciences, etc. A doctor is skilled at healing and it's expected that they must receive pay for services. So we must examine why spiritual health counseling and natural healing services or performing sacred ceremony is different when time, training, experience, and the like are also required. A good priest has spent thousands of dollars and a significant number of years learning how to master their craft.

That is not to say that we should eliminate giving of free things or that we should not make adjustments for someone who truly doesn't have the resources. Ifa says that person we help to. Many verses expresses the idea of putting two cowries to three to get a divination. That is an indication that the person was poor . The diviner did the divination anyway. In that circumstance, the person showed gratitude by paying them after their blessings came through. So greed whether on the part of the diviner having no compassion for those who are financially challenged or on the part of the client by unwillingness to give for services, is still imbalance.

What many practitioners find however, is that when you really need something, the money will appear for it. At that point, it's up to the person to use it for what it was intended and not something else. In my own journey , money was always an obstacle to getting initiated. The prices of some lineages were equivalent to a small mortgage and totally unreasonable for me. When it came time for me to initiate, they let me know through dreams first. Then I was crippled with a serious injury that prevented me from walking. The Babalawo told me I would not walk until I initiate. At that time, I was in the

hospital, couldn't work because of my injury, and by myself. But as soon as I agreed to initiate, people started calling out of the woodwork who owed me money, who gave me plane tickets to get to him, who found incredible discounts that were unheard of. I knew Ifa was working to get me what I needed. Sure enough, 1 month later, what I could not achieve earlier for years, was possible and done. I received a hand of Ifa. I walked without cane 1 week afterwards. Within a couple months I underwent the full Ifa initiation. That lesson taught me that while we may not always have what we want, we will always have what we need..when we really need it. So that core belief is really related to faith and trusting the process.

Self Identity and Ego

Self identity is another area of core beliefs that must be reconciled in Isese. In the west, we are accustomed to the idea of free will and choice for every aspect of our lives. While free will and choice are parts of Isese, the place from which that free derives may be different than what we perceive. We often perceive ourselves only through our physical identity and autonomy. We glorify the individual.

Isese tends to emphasize that which is indivisible in that it does not exclude the path of the soul, ancestors, spiritual guides and a multidimensional reality. We recognize that we are immortal beings and that we actually chose to come to this planet to be born. We recognize that while there are choices we make once we are born, there are also choices we made, as souls , *BEFORE* we were born. Those choices impact our opportunities and possibilities. Ifa is the path of destiny and is

designed to help us fulfill our highest destiny. BUT... that has to take into account your complete being as opposed to just your physical identity and conscious understanding.

To that end, we learn to look at our experiences beyond just the obvious. That means that when a crisis comes up in our lives, we may need to look at it from the perspective of what am I supposed to learn from this. Or what is it designed to do as it relates to my life's work , soul purpose, or life lessons. This helps us better to understand the nature of the situation and therefore potential solutions.

An example may be that you are at work and encountering a set back in terms of being promoted. Perhaps it's been years of hard work but no reward and only frustration. You think it is the supervisor who hates you and is blocking you. But you go to the oracle and you ask how to solve it so you can get promoted. The oracle reveals that this job and kind of work is not in alignment with your destiny. It may say that your ancestors are calling for you to return to the family trade or that you agreed before you were born to be a healer. But the job you are working is in sales. You discover that is why you are not able to progress on this job and that progress will happen when you do that.

Another way identity is challenged is through the ego. The ego is a person's sense of self or how they would like others to see them. Ego develops from childhood where everything revolves around "me" into what we call our personality or identity. It does not necessarily reflect who we truly are. But it can influence our behaviors and attitudes especially in public, in new situations and in relationship to other people.

Many times it can produce an attitude of control, defensiveness, arrogance, hot temper, and self righteousness especially when confronted with opposing opinions. Conflicting opinions or concepts often bring people to a place of anger because the ego feels the most out of control when it's challenged. It feels like an attack on the person, their identity because the ego creates the illusion that our opinions and beliefs make you who we are. This leads to feeling insecure or vulnerable. In response, the ego works attempts to 'defend us' against any person or idea it has deemed the "enemy".

Some ways that may show up is :

- Strong emotional reactions
- False confidence (overcompensation)
- Extremism or rigid thinking
- Immediate rejection of any idea that conflicts with the ego beliefs
- The need to compete with others. (a belief that another person's success is a threat to their own or a need to feel "better" than someone else)
- Constant comparison to others
- Attention seeking behaviors or needing to be the center of attention
- Judging of others (mocking, insulting, threatening)
- Over analyzing (obsessive thoughts that stop you from completing any action)

Childhood wounds are especially magnified as unhealed emotional wounds have a tendency to be triggered in situations such as new spiritual families or relationships. For instance, unhealed mother or father issues can show up as difficulties with godparents. You can be prone to projections

where you perceive them as doing the same thing a parent did even though they are completely different people and situations. These kinds of attitudes can severely inhibit personal growth in this tradition where the qualities of humility, cool or gentleness, self control, and deference to the wisdom of elders are core values.

The ego can give an overinflated sense of self importance or perception that you are above or beyond certain things. For beginners, it is first triggered when learning greetings. The greetings will be discussed in a later chapter but the culture holds to some very specific approaches to greeting elders that are pretty much worldwide. These are gestures of curtesy that are shown to elders that call for types of bows from curtsy to some full prostrations. If you are coming from a culture that does not include these, it can trigger the ego that doesn't want to appear that it is lessening itself to another. Western culture perceives it as worshiping another whereas it really is just a cultural sign of respect to elders. We see it reflected in Asian culture with personal bows and kneeling. Likewise it is in African and particularly Yoruba culture as well. It calls for a sense of humility and ability to be vulnerable and receptive to further teaching and guidance. It is also a recognition of that persons "crown" or Orisa if they are a spiritual elder. Showing respect to elders opens the way for learning and growing.

The ego can also show up with the modern attitude of feeling like you don't need help or teaching because you know it all already. Again the ego believes that since you read some books and saw YouTube and studied through google university that you already know. The ego often wishes to tell the teacher what you know so that they can skip over fundamentals and

get right to the things you want to know. I am hear to tell you it doesn't work like that. No matter what you studied....including this book..no matter how much research you did... it will never prepare you for direct teachings in a specific lineage or under a specific elder. In order to progress you have to be willing to learn, unlearn, and relearn many things. Information does not equal experience and one experience can't explain all experiences. What you read will never give you the kind of knowledge experience can. Even if you don't have an elder, you have to remain an open vessel and understand that in this tradition, there is always something to learn... and it will take multiple lifetimes to learn it all. Anyone attempting to teach or do work with or for the public, in this tradition, but doesn't have a relationship with elders, is a red flag. We don't have insta Babas or Iyas.

Likewise, the ego can assert itself when understanding the "pecking order" of the Ile. That means there are multiple elders and a hierarchy that requires a certain approach. If a person is a part of a temple or ile, there will be jobs for everyone. Beginners may get the most humble jobs because they are at the beginning of the learning process. It's important to note that while it may not feel that important, all jobs are required to make things functions well. Everyone simple can't just jump the line to run when one has yet to learn how to crawl or walk. Be ok with the learning process and a happy contributor and you will find you will learn a great deal...just listening to others.

Living in The Diaspora vs Living in Yorubaland

Nothing presents more stark contrasts to core beliefs than

being in another country and taking note of how world views and perspectives change according to environment and culture. How we acquire food is one vast contrast. In many places in Yorubaland, it is not uncommon to see an animal slaughtered for food. They take the animal, make prayers and sacrifices and the animal is cleaned and prepared to be eaten. Nothing is wasted. When they cook it, it may be outside in big pots over wood fires and enough for the whole community. This is everyday life and just how things are in some areas. There may be a shortage in electricity so the food has to be eaten before it spoils. For the most part, even in a large city such as Ibadan, its “country” living.

Contrast that to America where the majority of African Americans live in urban areas and our food is purchased at a grocery store. We are far removed from the slaughter houses from which the meat may come from. This presents two core value issues. One is that we don’t typically slaughter our own food. We certainly don’t do it daily...or even weekly. So we have to re examine our perspective of this in relation to the tradition and offerings, because there are times when an animal is called to be sacrificed. This is called Ebo . However, there are other times when prepared food is called for. As mentioned earlier, we are no longer in 1200 AD nor in Africa where we might slaughter our food everyday. That means we must use what is practical as well as effective.

The other core value is animal sacrifice itself. Many people coming from the west have embraced the idea of animal rights. It presents a challenge if you enter the tradition with these things in mind. Because we are often disconnected from nature in a greater way, the perception is that animal sacrifice is

animal cruelty. Practitioners in the west have had to go to court and risk being arrested due to such accusations. The case of the Church of Lukumi Babalu Aye, Inc. v. City of Hialeah was such a case. It's ruling that animal sacrifice was protected under the first amendment of freedom of religion is what protects practitioners in the United States today.

What must be kept in mind, is that this is an indigenous ancient tradition. Contrary to the now popular belief that Africans were originally vegans, this couldn't be further from the truth. Cave paintings demonstrate hunting even 70,000 years ago. This is how people have lived for tens of thousands of years. The idea of sacrifice and being "saved by the blood" is not exempt even from Abrahamic scriptures because the actual people in those texts were indigenous people too. From sacrificing a ram to a lamb these are more than symbolic. In fact, the entire Christian Faith is predicated on the human sacrifice of Jesus and his blood.

Indigenous culture is built on nature and the circle of life. All life forms feed from other life forms. Each process is honored and respected. Everything dies and gives life to something else on this planet. Plants die so animals including humans can live. Animals die so humans can live. When animals and humans die, it feeds the soil for plants and trees to grow. This is just how it works. What is different, is that animals aren't mass slaughtered with no regard for their lives as in a slaughter house. They are considered sacred and elevated spiritually as they carry prayers to heaven.

To be honest, my father was a butcher by trade and had a meat market when I was growing up. I was no stranger to seeing

slaughtered animals as food. It wasn't until I had to sacrifice a chicken myself, however, that I found sacredness in the act. Until that moment, I never considered the many lives of the chickens killed in a plate of hot wings. It was a shift in core values at that point. One that caused me to value and appreciate my food and those animals used for eating and spiritual work.

Lastly is addressing how some Ebos are designed to save lives. In fact, many times adimu in terms of other food can be given for general requests. But when there is a life threatening situation that is at play, this is where Ebo with animals is most valuable. I personally reflect on several of my clients I know healed of cancer from such ebos. My first client was diagnosed with breast cancer. The reading was not favorable and required certain things change drastically with her. She was going to have to have surgery and have her breast removed. She did several ebos with a goat, a chicken and pigeon. One was to support the surgical process. One was for healing completely. Without going deep into her story, after she I did the Ebo for her complete healing, she got a call from her surgeon a month later. After looking at the new pre surgical scans, the cancer had all but disappeared. She did not have to have a mastectomy after all! Six months later, she reported back she was till cancer free and as of this writing, its been a couple years and she has had no further problems.

Another client was in worse condition. She was stage 4 cancer in the lungs and liver. She had an 8 inch mass in her chest. She had been recommended for hospice by the time she came to me. I did the reading and I was amazed that Ifa said she could be healed! I proceeded with the divination and carried out the

ebo. While part of the Ebo did require a change of attitude on her part, the Ebo required an animal. Her divination was on February 18. On My 6th, I received a call from her stating that her cancer was completely gone! The 8 inch mass was less than a millimeter and not a threat at all. I was amazed myself. It was a moment , I realized just how powerful these methods could be. While I am not saying this can work in every instance, I am expressing how powerful Ebo can be in life threatening situations. It is situations like these core values about the validity and value of these traditions can shine and transform most.

As we close this chapter on Isese and our core values that influence our practice of it, these and others will come up for you as you develop. You are encouraged to be open to growth and change. Take your time and don't rush to jump into something so new. This is truly a lifestyle change that doesn't and won't happen over night. This lifestyle change tends to be for life so you have time to acclimate and ease into it. That will allow for the core values to shift bit by bit.

Workbook Exercises

This chapter explore both Isese and the core values that one is often confronted with when embracing this tradition. The following workbook exercises are intended to help you explore potential core values you have and may need to address.

Meeting the Ego

Journal exercise: Write down who you think you are and why

you are the way you are. Allow yourself to just write without trying to control how it appears.

Explore the following questions:

1. How do you feel when you are not in control of a situation and must depend on someone else to guide you?
2. How does your personal experiences and upbringing impact how you view elders?
3. How do you respond when you are not the center of attention or you feel ignored?

particularly any sentence you begin with the word I.

1. How often do you use “I” and speak about yourself?

2. What was an adjective you used to describe yourself?

3. Did anything in those conversations bring any uncomfortable emotional reaction? Describe the conversation and what you felt. Be honest.

Notes:

Chapter 3

What is Ifa? The Way of Wisdom

What exactly IS Ifa ? Is it a religion? A tradition? A Culture? An oracle? A collection of oral literary corpus? Another name for a prophet? I contend it is all of those things and yet none of those things. Ifa is as broad as you can imagine and can only be understood according to one's level of consciousness. As your own consciousness expands, so does your understanding of Ifa.

One never finishes learning Fa. There are levels and degrees within it. Even elderly bokono set out on journeys that may take them into distant parts of West Africa to sit at the feet of famous sages and learn more. Bernard Maupoil, whose study of Fa is still unequaled, had the immense advantage of having as his informant the chief bokono of the former Fon kingdom, Gedegbe. This truly wise man was responsible, during the days of the sovereign glory of the Fon, for divining for the king and the entire country. He also

*examined every aspiring bokono before the priest was permitted to practice and regulated the ethical behavior and teachings of bokono throughout the kingdom. Gedegbe knew entire levels of Fa not accessible to any-one else. **These higher levels of Fa had nothing at all to say about the demigods or spirits; they were instead about the interaction of the primary cosmic elements themselves, and one was devoted to astrology.** (Zuesse, 1975)*

So rather than begin with one meaning, we will explore its multifaceted meanings. This chapter will explore the nature of Ifa. We will explore its wisdom, it's lore, and its sacred technology. We explore this so that we can understand the value in walking this path and why so many are now drawn to it.

Who is Orunmila?

We can't begin a discussion on Ifa without including a discussion on Orunmila. Orunmila is the Orisa of divination and destiny. Orunmila is referred to in the Odus as a metaphor, historical terms in the history of the tradition, and also as a catch phrase term in the Odus describing any diviner. He is described as a prophet and seer because of the ability to see past, present, and future. Orunmila is the witness to destiny and therefore knows the life purpose and plan for all lives on Earth. The primordial of Orunmila is Ela, the spirit of light. Divination allows us to access the sacred wisdom of the universe to assist us in decision making, healing, improving the quality of our lives, empowerment, conflict resolution and problem solving. Those who are imitates to Ifa are called Awo Ifa, Babalawos, and Iyanifas or Iyalawos)

While Ifa more precisely refers to the actual oracle and Orunmila

refers to the diviner of the Oracle, they are often used synonymously. Orunmila is often depicted as the protagonist in the verses. If we look at the actual oracle, we will find multiple origins and applications across multiple ethnic groups. Orunmila however is considered the developer of the system we most identify with today. The oracle, however, contains the wisdom of all of the Orisa and Irunmola in the tradition. It is a repository for all of their stories, medicines, and remedies. Each Orisa has their own priesthood with rituals and solutions . All use the Oracles in one way or another. It is this reason Ifa is often considered the Master oracle.

One interpretation says Ifa means to scrape. This scraping is relayed in an itan (background story) found in the Ifa Odu scripture, Osa Irete, of how Olodumare (the Almighty) gave Orunmila (sage) 16 kegs to swallow. Some bits fell on the floor and he was to scrape them from the floor and consume those too. Once consumed he realized that the 16 kegs contained all of the wisdom of the world. As it has also been expressed as a language by which we communicate with the Divine.. To that end, the scraping refers to the marks on the ground that are made that produces the binary letters of that language.

Another version of understanding the scraping is related to one of the creation stories where a 5 toed hen is responsible for covering the Earth over water from its scratching. Before the wooden tools of opon Ifa were used to mark the sacred language, the symbols were scratched on the Mother Earth, Ile.

Wande Abimbola shares another story given to him by Baba Ifatoogun in Okanransode where the origin of the Ifa system may be from Osun. Olodumare released a bag of wisdom for all Orisa to look for. The one who finds it first would be the wisest of them all.

When Osun and Orunmila went in search of the bag, Osun found it first. It was only due to a hole in her pocket that it fell out and Orunmila grabbed it taking it for himself. An argument ensued about the rightful owner and Orunmila gave Osun a handful which became the Eerindinlogun oracle.

Abimbola also gives us the story of Orunmila, a sage and divinity of Wisdom in the Yoruba tradition leaving the oracle to his children when he returned to Orun, the spiritual realm. In Iwori Meji and Eji Ogbe, we learn that after being disrespected by one of his children, he decided to leave the world. The world was thrown into chaos and despair. His children then climbed a great palm tree upon which he was and begged him to return. Frustrated with the world, he refused, but gave them 16 palm nuts to use to solve problems. (Abimbola).

Who or What is Odu?

Just as we cannot explore Ifa without exploring Orunmila, we cannot explore Ifa or Orunmila without exploring Odu. Orunmila governs all oracles in the tradition through his marriage to Odu, the Calabash of Wisdom. Odu is a term that can be confusing for a beginner because you will hear practitioners use the word in several different contexts.

The first is as the name of the wife of Orunmila. The second way the word Odu is used is as the name of the principles or chapters that make up the Ifa Oracles. They are called Odus each with their own name . number and the sacred oral verses are categorized through them. There are 16 major Odus and 240 minor ones making up 256 in total.

The third way Odu is related to is as a womb. In this way, she is considered the seat of feminine consciousness and it's inherent power to act as a portal between worlds. A womb brings spiritual energy from Orun into physical manifestation in Aye. This understanding connected to the actual shrine given to some Awo Ifa. (Initiates to Ifa) during the initiation process. To a male awo who receives one, it is a means of balancing out his masculine energy with feminine energy and access to Aje, the feminine of power. To a female Awo, Odu is considered an extension of her own womb and natural Aje energy. Because of the natural expression in her body, an Odu shrine is not necessary.

Some interpret the name Odu to mean to strive or struggle. In that light the struggle is giving birth. Odu gives birth to twins. Birth involves a struggle to push to get to the end. A woman must continue to strive forward to bring forth a child.

Another name for Odu is Gbadu. According to the book, *In the Back of a Black Mans Mind*, the name Fa is related to a palm tree river spirit called Gbadu. In the Dahomey Narrative, Gbadu is the daughter of Mawu, the supreme divinity, and she sits with her 16 eyes closed at the top of the palm tree. As an intermediary between her mother and the world, she is able to relay wisdom to the world. Her messenger is her brother Legba who climbs up the palm tree every morning to receive the messages of Gbadu. She delivers them through opening her eyes and placing 1 or 2 palm kernels in his hands. This method is how the Afa oracle delivers wisdom through the palm nuts.



Image of Gbadu from Vodun Grove, Benin



We find another version of Afa through the Igbo oral traditions. According to John Umeh in *After God is Dibia* , the oracle was left by an ancient woman of immeasurable wisdom. This woman was the greatest seer known to the world able to know everything and guided the people with her mystical knowledge. She lived a very long time but eventually returned to the spiritual world. Before she ascended she left instructions to bury her body at the foot of the Ugili tree. She explained the seeds of the Ugili tree will create pods that can be strung together in 4 to make a device that can communicate through its open and closed layouts. It was this

method that the world would be able to access her wisdom and continue to receive guidance.

In the Odu Ose Oyeku in the Ifa literary corpus, we find yet another story of the ancient mother called Odu. Odu is Iya Agba, a wise ancient grandmother who was leaving the world. Odu brings the gift of motherhood to the world. Odu is the womb through which all things come into the world. When Iya Agba was ready to leave, she left a great Calabash divided into 4 to represent her so that her children of the world could still access her wisdom. In the Yoruba tradition, Odu is the wife of Orunmila and thus the key to the great wisdom that Orunmila is able to share.

An Ijebu Babalawo K Ositola in 1982 explained in an interview that it was Odu , first Diviner, who loved her husband, Orunmila so much that she revealed to him the knowledge of divination so that man could communicate with the spirit realm. (Drewel , 1990) .

This may describe the metaphor in the Odu Iwori Irete that describes the story of how Orunmila had a first wife, Egan who couldn't have children. He then married another woman Odu who bore him 16 children who would multiply. These children became the 16 Major Odus. This points to an earlier system of Ifa that existed in which the Odu system was added later.

Opeola in *Ifa Divination: A systemic Approach* , the author explains:

Ifa literary was produced by the Aje (mistranslated into English to mean witch) who were associated with Odu. She received and distributed the vital force emanating from Olodumare (Odu Ifa Irete Qlota). Other contributors are the Babalawo (followers of Orunmila) and Ogboni (members of

ancient Mole cult transformed into Ogboni cult by the supporters of Oduduwa. The Ogboni the equivalent of western Gnostic, invented the number system used to derive the 256 Odu Ifa. Signatures or symbols. The Babalawos coordinated the work and interpreted the messages derived through the use of divination instruments into prose and verses called Ese Ifa.

Regardless of the backstory, the Ifa oracle points to an ancient spiritual technology that is adaptable to suit the needs of the people who use it. These stories vary from culture but they demonstrate the expansiveness of Ifa across the region of West Africa and through history. Because many share the core oracle, the overall system even transcending culture and ethnicity became known as Ifa/Afa/Fa and other variations. All also express the relationship between Ifa as an oracle of wisdom and a method of problem solving . They also reflect a divine language relayed through nature.

Ifa as a Codified Language

This language of wisdom or nature is mathematical and expressed as binary code. It is adaptable to be expressed through cultural paradigms based on ethnic culture, historical lands and regions. The ancients, noting the empirical evidence in nature and knowledge from classical African thought, identified a codified way of living and being that allowed us to grasp the true nature of the soul, the Earth, and our existence. Each region has its own cultural history related to the language. Through culture, the binary language is able to express proverbs, stories, sacred verses, oral history. It encompasses spiritual technology of nature including psychology,

mathematics, physics, biology, health, cosmology, metaphysics, ecology, medicine, in addition to cultural history, ethnic identity, community development, personal development, spiritual guidance.

If we translated this into 21st century terms, this codified language could be likened to be a cosmic or spiritual operating system that is the matrix for life on Earth and the universe. Within that operating system are software programs or apps that allow us certain potentials. This matrix holds the collective information database that we can draw from to assist us in our lives. Another metaphor may be the word wide web as a repository of collective wisdom. When we make a query on a certain topic, many streams of information comes up applicable to it.

The Yoruba culture calls this collective body of knowledge and oral wisdom through the Ifa Odu Corpus. It is an indigenous African thought system and repository of collective knowledge . The Yoruba have particularly expressed their cultural and historical experiences including, medicine, philosophy and folklore through this body of knowledge.

What stands at the core of this language is the primordial structure of this sacred tradition.. Noting the dynamics of light and dark, heaven and Earth, seasons, and moon, and star placements, they mapped out 16 core aspects of the universe. Those 16 core aspects was then multiplied by each other and 256 frequencies were identified to encompass everything in existence. As a science, it's cosmology then is related to how and why we came into physical existence. This begins with the birth of light itself.

Ifa as Light

The light of Ifa itself can be expressed as Ela. All Babalawos and Iyanifas call on Ela when invoking Orunmila's presence. Ela is primordial light that existed prior to the world when it was still dark. Orunmila is considered the prophet or sage of the Ifa Oracle. Orunmila is also considered synonymous with Ela by many and by others considered an incarnation of Ela. Here is where the primordial Ela intersects with the historical Orunmila and Orunmila becomes synonymous with both Ela and the name Ifa. The name Orunmila means Orun mi Ela which is Heaven is my light. With this understanding, Ifa originates from primordial light from the non invisible realm. Before that light, was darkness which was the womb of existence. Out of that darkness emerged 256 colors of visible light. When all of these colors are combined, it is actually illuinescent white light that is seen.

The Ifa Verse In Ogunda Osa reflects Ela as Light

Ela omo osin. Ela Omo Oyigiyigi ota omi.

Spirit of Light, child of the Ruler. Spirit of Light, child of the offspring of the Stone in the Water.

Awa di oyigiyigi. A ki o ku wa.

We ourselves become manifestation. The stone that birthed the Spirit of Light will never die.

Ela ro a ki o ku mo, okiribiti. Ela ro (Sokale) Orunko Ifá.

The Spirit of Light has descended to Earth, we die no more.

This is the name we give to Destiny.

Entiti ngba ni l'a. Nwon se ebo Ela fun mi.

This is the one who saved us. We have made offerings to the Spirit of Light

Ko t'ina, ko to ro.

It is of no substance. It is too small to be thought of.

Beni on (Ela) ni gba ni la n'Ife, Oba – a – mola.

Yet It delivered the Immortals from all trouble, the Chief for whom to know is to be saved.

Ela, Omo Osin mo wari o! Ela meji, mo wari o.

The Spirit of Light, Son of the Ruler, I praise you. The Spirit of Light, the Spirit of Light, I praise you.

Ela mo yin boru. Ela mo yin boye. Ela mo yin bosise.

Spirit of Light I beg you to lift my burden. Spirit of light I beg you to lift my burden from Earth. Spirit of Light I ask you to present my burden to the Immortals.

Ela poke. Eni esi so wa soro odun. Odun ko wo wa sodun.

The Spirit of light has appeared. The friend has returned for this year's festival. The celebration returns.

Odun oni si ko, Ela poke, Ela ro, Ela ro, Ela ro, ko wa gbu're.

The celebration has returned. Light has appeared. Light descend. Light descend. Light descend, prayers to accept.

This light has also been expressed through the stories of Osumare. Osumare is a primordial divinity associated with the rainbow light. Dahomey legends suggest Osumare was the first diviners and Olodumare's personal diviner residing only in Orun. The rainbow is certainly one of the most primordial forms of light expressed through the sacred in nature. Through a rainbow, light travels down on droplets of water. Osumare is symbolized as a rainbow encircling the Earth. The above stanza speaks of Ela as the offspring of Oyigiyigi. Oyigiyigi is translated as a stone covered in water. This stone is the rock of creation and emits light. All of these references suggests that the purest representation of Ifa is light itself.

We also find the complementary idea of light and the divine light in Igbo Afa cosmology. John Umeh, author of *After God is Dibia*, describes Agwu, the divinity that governs Afa divination in Igbo in the same way Orunmila governs Ifa in Yoruba. He describes Agwu also as light.

Ose Obala , Agwu is the God of Light, Anwu, whose eye is the Sun (Anyanwu). ..As the God of Light, Agwu is an integral part of Ose Ora (Uche Chukwu), the universal Consciousness of God...which is the completeness awareness of what was, what is, and what will be.....God of Light whose blaze or Divine Light disperses and/or extinguishes danger, evil or darkness.” (Page 114).

It is this light that creation in the material realm begins. Light itself travels on wavelengths. Those wavelengths become visible as an electromagnetic spectrum of color. That spectrum is perceived through our eyes in 256 colors. These wavelengths reflect light much like a crystal prism reflects light through its many facets. Each facet has a different angle and color stream the light source passes through. These 256 wavelengths reflect 256 facets of the visible world. It seems apparent that this is not an arbitrary number but one reflecting how we experience the world itself. It is this spectrum of light that over time becomes more dense and manifests in matter and the physical world.

Ifa as Witness to Destiny

The light, as a spiritual concept brings us to understand it as it relates to spiritual awakening. That is, coming out of a state of blindness or sleep. Orunmila is often referred to as *elerin ipin* which means

witness to destiny. Orunmila is considered great because every beings destiny or life path was established before they were born and that path was witnessed by Orunmila in the realm of light. Therefore when we use the oracle, it is a tool to align us with that path.

A witness can see what is happening or has happened. So our vision and by extension our perceptions influence our understanding . There is both physical vision which is the vehicle through which light reflects so that we can see the physical world. There is also the spiritual vision that allows us to see the inner world beyond the physical. The gift of prophecy, psychic ability, empathy, telepathy, and such are a result of spiritual sight. It allows for an awakened consciousness. As an oracle, Ifa offers these tools of insight or inner sight to know and become aware beyond our normal state of awareness.

One of the most ancient concepts in Africa is that of the All seeing eye. Dating back to Ancient Egypt, this all seeing eye was called the Eye of Tahuti or Heru. Tehuti, as is Orunmila was considered a divinity of wisdom and Heru was light reflected from the sun. The symbol is used in esoteric circles today to reflect spiritual wisdom up to an including the American dollar bill. This concept is not just one from Ancient Egypt, but one that is central to Ifa as witness to destiny.



It is with this in mind that Ifa is not just a tool to know the future, but a tool to help humanity awaken to higher consciousness. It is our path to ascension, wholeness, and the fulfillment of our destiny or divine purpose. It is here that our character must become refined in order to spiritually evolve. That is done through the human experience on Earth.

This path on Earth is not without trials and tribulations. Our experiences can sometimes involve suffering and pain. Many begin

this path because they perceive a sense of power that may come with it. It's especially desirable from persons who perceive themselves as not having power. The assumption is to know one's fate is to be able to change it and control it. By extension the notion of having power over others implies that our personal will is the highest form of power. This is a great misunderstanding of Ifa. The great Fon philosopher of Fa, Gedegbe shares:

The great fault, in the ethics that is implied in Fa philosophy, is excessive self-will. Fa is not a method of changing one's fate, but of adjusting to it (in the active, not the passive, sense). Knowing his own characteristic engrained failings, the wise man avoids subjecting himself to otherwise inevitable pitfalls. One must learn to accept one's own limits. These "limits," the Fon believe, are chosen by oneself before birth as one's destiny-soul. Maintaining a good relationship with our destiny, knowing its possibilities and inadequacies, enables us to make the very best life possible for ourselves. Ignorance of the powers bearing on us makes us entirely their victim. The fortunate and happy can push their luck too far; the unfortunate can through hopeless passivity make their lot gratuitously agonizing.

So Ifa acts as an operating manual for the soul. It helps us to understand how to maximize our human potential through both understanding our gifts, our choices and our limitations (taboos.)

Awakening the Inner Witness

Ifa also helps us begin to understand who we are and who we are not by allowing us to release a false identity. Part of what hems us

up is our attachment to an image or identity which is not who we really are. When we are born , we become spiritual essence encased in matter and forget our spiritual identity. The detachment from the spiritual world into the material world forces us to reorientate in order to form the new person that will have this life experience.

That person or persona becomes who we identify with as our Selves. Because we forget our spiritual essence, we begin to think we are our bodies, our emotions, our thoughts, our status, image, etc. But if we were to look closely we will find that those things are NOT who we really are. They are things produced from our human condition and not our soul identity that existed before we incarnated in human form. We find that who we are is far beyond the superficial perceptions of being and we are more a divine spiritual being having a human experience. To that end we must begin to shift our identity to beyond just our human experience and re ask.. who we are on a soul level?

Exercise

Consider for a moment if you are your body or if you have a body? If you cut off a leg, your ability to use your body may change but the you on the inside doesn't change. Also examine if you are your thoughts. Consider when you have an inner conversation with "yourself". Who is talking? And who is listening and responding? If you feel grief one day, does the feeling of grief fade in time? Did it have a start point? If so, then you can't be your emotions either. You experience emotions. Who is the you that is having the experience?

Transpersonal psychology calls this the Watcher self. It is the objective self that watches our human experience almost as a 3rd party. It is the part of our being that is able to be objective and unbiased. In Ifa, this watcher would be considered a witness. Ifa is the divine witness to creation, our destiny, and our experiences. A witness sees and observes. We can begin to tap Orunmila within us by learning to identify more with the witness self and transcending the attachment to the assumed identity shaped by our human condition. The Ifa Oracle is able to tap that witness self and identify solutions for our life dilemmas.

Many of our dilemmas are caused by not being in alignment with our destiny and true selves. We don't understand who we are, our potential or our life lessons. Ifa teaches that this understanding is found in what is called the Ori. Our Ori is the divine part of ourselves that holds the blueprint for our destiny. When we consult the oracle, we are consulting the Ori. Until we align to our Ori, we are more subject to repeat untold patterns of lessons and experience more trials than would be necessary because we don't know or remember why we are here or what the lesson was supposed to be.

So Ifa is the process of getting in alignment with our destiny and inner divinity. Once that alignment happens, we are able to live life more on purpose and experience happiness and wholeness. It doesn't mean we won't have challenges. It means we will be better equipped to handle them and overcome them. Ifa calls this ire gbogbo or good fortune. The ancient texts related a good life to having a spouse, children, good community relations, and making good living. In the 21st century, that is translated to mean harmony in our relationships, good health, long life, abundance, legacy, and a fulfilling life's work.

It is here that Ifa becomes a great support for us. While we forget the plan for our lives and who we are, we are not unsupported in this process. Ifa helps us to understand how to get back in alignment with the plan through the oracle and how to resolve many issues that arise from being out of alignment through Ebo.

Ebo and the Law of Sacrifice

Ifa expounds that one of the great solutions to life's problems is through Ebo and the Law of Sacrifice. Ifa holds that it is through sacrifice that we can bring balance and harmony to our lives. Sacrifice means to attain something of greater value, one must give up something of lesser value. Ebo is considered the child of Orunmila and was taught as a means of alleviating suffering and achieving our goals.

Inherent in universal laws of nature is the idea of the need to maintain sacred balance. Balance in thought. Balance in action. Balance in life in general. Too much or too little in either direction will tilt the scales and set off a chain of events that eventually has to be rebalanced. To that end, the necessity of sacrifice in the tradition speaks to that idea... of moderation and balance. It says never take or ask for more than you give. It says that what is removed, damaged, or broken has to be replaced, compensated, returned. This is called the Law of reciprocity.

When one prays for a thing, you are asking for something to be done to you, given to you or something on your behalf. You are invoking the favor of the divine, forces of nature, or ancestors to assist and

support your plight. So you are seeking to receive something. The law of reciprocity says you must also give something back.. that is equal in value. I say value but not especially in terms of money. Money is simply energy. Energy can come in many forms. Food, support, things, actions, etc. Ebo is almost always called for in Ifa Orisa Divinations as a part of the solution. The ebos can and do vary greatly as they can depend on the situation, the Orisa or other spirits involved, the culture, availability of resources and the skill of the diviner.

Ebo/ sacrifice can also come in the form of surrendering character traits that no longer serve your development. If one wants to be healthier and have a better body, one must discontinue habits that are unhealthy. We are often unaware of how our own habits, choices, attitudes, and behaviors are the direct source of our personal challenges, misfortunes, etc. So many would like to place the blame of their problems on some other negative spirit, ajoguns (spirits of misfortune) or force when in fact, it is most often of their own making.

Irete Oyeku stresses the importance of BEHAVIOR as Ebo to avert death and get ire:

Death, do not make my house a ruin. I have done no cruel deed. Disease, do not make my house a ruin. I have done no cruel deed. To both friends and foes I do good. I have done no cruel act. When people were involved in the litigation at Oko, I was compassionate and gave them help. I met two people fighting; I helped them. I have done no evil. Poverty, do not make my house a ruin. I have never been idle. I have done no evil. Loss, do not make my house a ruin. I will never steal.

Based on this verse, the Ifa ethical principles to use as personal sacrifice are:

- Doing good to friends and enemies,
- Helping to solve litigation (implication: never engage into litigation),
- Being proactive,
- Never being lazy (laziness is regarded as one of the worst defects by Ifa),
- Helping mankind,
- Avoiding stealing.

When we are able to understand that our actions and attitudes are often the culprit to imbalance in our lives, we can then take responsibility for making necessary changes. This becomes the ultimate sacrifice. Sacrificing lower level habits for greater qualities and virtues become the ultimate path to empowerment. In the circumstances indicated below, it is much more important to change one's character than offer an animal sacrifice.

Irete Oyeku on Character:

Orifusi, father of Eku was searching for a way to avoid death.

So that death would not take him, his children or his wife.

The diviner's said, if you want to avoid death,

Follow the teachings of Ifa

Ifa will teach you conduct and character which will enable you to avoid death.

They said, when you sacrifice, you should be doing good from this day on

More than ever before.

For your sacrifice is in vain, if your character is deficient.

Therefore, you should take the sacrificial pigeons and chickens home.

Release them. You should not kill them.

Instead give them food and water if they come to eat at your house.

And you must not kill anything

For one who does not want death to kill them,

Must not kill anything.

In closing, we find, Ifa is ultimately about acquiring wisdom and strength of character. Our lives hold lessons that will help us to develop and become strong if we are mindful about it. If we take time to learn from them. We understand that we are giving the tools to support us in this journey of life. Ifa can give us guidance and help us to find direction in our path but it is up to us to use it. Therefore it is not necessary to look for an outer savior. We have already been given what we need. We can save ourselves if we use what is given.

Iwori Osa on Using what Olodumare Gives You to Help Yourself

Atikaresete , the self adjuster and priest of heaven

Divined Ifa for Olodumare and the world,

When the people of the world were running to

Olodumare for everything.

Crying out, “ I have come”

“Save me; Please save me.

Olodumare said “ What is the matter?”

Those whom I have given ability do not use their ability.

And those him I gave wisdom do not use the wisdom
I have given them.
Children who do not see their parents
Will strive for their own strength.

Inner Witness Exercises

The following exercises are designed to help you tap more of your inner witness. By learning a process of mindful observation, you can become more consciously aware of how the world is impacting you and vice versa. This process is called mindfulness and can be quite helpful in learning how to focus your attention.

Exercise 1- Third Person Scenario

Try to examine your day. Write what happened in your day from a third person perspective. For example, rather than write “I went to the store to get groceries.” You would write She or (your name) went to the store to get groceries.

Try doing that exercise for a few days to get a hang of it.

2nd exercise

Write a short summary of your life story and do so in third person.

3rd Exercise

Based on writing your life as an observer? What new insights did you discover?

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Chapter 4

Iwa: The Path of Character

When I began my spiritual path, I experienced a series of traumas that impacted me greatly. Stunted by the pain of the past, I found it difficult to move forward. I didn't understand why I had to go through these situations that were so emotionally taxing. I found myself in meditation asking this question of why. Unexpectedly, I heard an answer clear as day and, in a voice, not quite my own. It said, "To build strength of character." I was startled by the answer. And, to be honest, a little irritated! "You mean", I thought, "that I went through all of that...for character?" I couldn't grasp how painful events could build strength of character. ...further I had to figure out what exactly character was and why it was so important in building it.

Isese places a high emphasis on the cultivation of character. Even though there is a divine witness that is objective, we cannot escape

the concept of character as long as we are in a human body. As a result, the key is to learn how to cultivate the character that will facilitate your highest destiny. Cultivation means that we have the ability to change and grow and become better than we were when we started.

We begin by defining what character is. Character can be features and traits that form an individual's nature. It can imply a subjective moral compass based on religious cultural values. It can also imply a role..like in theater but also ones we take on in life as an image.

Omoluabi is a Yoruba term used to denote a person of high character. It comes from the combined words omo-child, ti-that which, Olu iwa-owner of character, bi-born. Together it is the child from which character is born. Iwa means character but speaks more to the idea of integrity. Coolness is an idea expressed to signify this as opposed to heat or hot headedness. Qualities such as the following are highly valued and recognized as virtues to cultivate.

Oro Siso (Spoken word, the Yoruba accord great respect for intelligent and expert use of language)

Iteriba (Respect)/(Civility)

Inú rere (Kindness or good will towards others)

Irele (Humility)

Òtító (Truth)

Ìwà (Character)/(Virtue)

Akíkanjú (Bravery)

Iṣé (Hardwork)

Ife (Love)

Àfiorítì (Endurance)

Sùúrù (Patience)

Ìfarabalẹ̀ (Composure)

Òwò (Respect)

Èsò (Caution)

Ìmò (Knowledge)

Ogbón (Wisdom)

Òye (Understanding)

Qualities, such as anger, fear, arrogance, impatience, selfishness, jealousy, bitterness and such are seen as counterproductive.

Orunmila Marries Iwa

The following is a story about how Orunmila married Iwa (character). Often when we see stories of Orunmila marrying someone, it is a metaphor about two primary concepts or qualities merging or referencing a specific Ifa priest.

In Ogbe Otura we find a story about how Orunmila marries Iwa. Iwa was the daughter of Suuru (patience). Suuru was the child of Olodumare. Orunmila, was told that marrying Iwa would be the key to his success so he sought to marry her. When Orunmila sought Iwa's hand in marriage, she had one condition for him. That condition was that he always treat her well and not verbally or physically abuse her. Orunmila agreed and they married. Orunmila prospered after the marriage and all went well. He knew that it was his marriage to Iwa that afforded him this success. After a while, Orunmila began to be dissatisfied with Iwa and began to complain. Over time, it seemed nothing she did was ever enough or right for Orunmila. He began to treat her with disdain and contempt. Iwa was disheartened and began to feel taken for granted. She did not feel appreciated and felt he was being disrespectful to her. Iwa, feeling emotionally abused , decided she would leave. One day, when Orunmila was away, Iwa went home to her parents. When he returned home, he was surprised to find Iwa gone. Not only

that, his affairs began to immediately crumble. Very quickly, things went from bad to worse. He lost his fortune and his wife. Orunmila went to the diviner's to find out what to do. They explained his error of breaking her taboo and that his wife was connected to his ability to prosper. They said he needed to make amends with his wife and seek her forgiveness. Orunmila searched high and low for her going to King Alara, King Ajero, And King Owaran looking for her. He searched hi and low and couldn't find her. Finally, Esu revealed that she went to her parent's home in Orun. Orunmila followed and upon getting there, he begged her to return and apologized for mistreating her. She accepted his apology but explained that she would not return. She said, however, that she will stay with him in Spirit and that next time, he needed to treat his wife and people with appreciation and gratitude.

This story articulates several themes. One is how our behavior and attitude determines our success in life. An African American Adage says that you can catch more bees with honey than vinegar. This means being nice and respectful to people can draw support for you whereas treating them with disrespect will turn them away. Iwa (character) as the daughter of Suuru (patience). Patience is considered the mother of good character. This is reinforced in the Odu Ifa verse Ogbe Ogunda where it says: "Anger gets us nowhere. Patience is the mother of good character. An elder who has patience, has everything" Here we find a core value in cultivating good character for ourselves. In the story, Orunmila began to get impatient and lost his cool which resulted in an attitude that eventually lost his wife.

Patience

Understanding that Iwa is a daughter of Suuru and Suuru means

patience tells us that patience is primary key to self development. Patience is generally easier said than done. At least when one is first trying to learn. It shows up in how we interact with others as well as how we conduct ourselves in situations.

One way we learn lessons in patience is the ability to wait... to not need instant gratification. In the West, many grow up with the idea of fast food and having everything your way. Instant gratification is always sought for. When looking for information, we have become accustomed to doing a quick internet search to learn. People, these days also tend to feel entitled to whatever they want without working for it. It gives a false sense of entitlement. There is a wise saying in African American families that says anything worth having is worth working for. Another that says Haste makes waste. These expressions speak to the need to have patience for things to turn out right. The need to take one's time when pursuing a goal. A popular verse in Ifa Eji Ogbe is bit by bit we eat the head of a fish. It means we must be patient and take things slowly and carefully. The head , after all, has very tiny bones that must be removed to enjoy the inside.

Judgement about Others

Another message we learn from our story about Iwa is about judgment. People can be very judgmental regarding someone's else's character and by extension worthiness. Patience calls for a certain level of tolerance for the folly of others. Rather than harsh judgment and the tendency to ridicule or insult, we can seek to understand and even explore our own perceptions and possible misunderstandings. Moreover, we can make an effort to add a helping hand instead of placing negative judgements.

Self righteousness and viewing oneself as above or better than others can give us the impression that it is ok to judge others forgetting that we ourselves have lessons to learn. We learn from our story that constant judgment and criticism of others undermines our opportunities for success. This forces us to move away from self righteous attitudes of superiority and embrace the humanity of all. It brings us to another quality patience produces...**humility** and **perseverance**.

Character is built upon experiences that teach us , not just words or admonishments. It is the difference between having knowledge and cultivating wisdom. A person may have knowledge about a thing, but you only really learn it when you experience the lesson. Wisdom can come from careful observation, but most wisdom comes from experience. A person will rarely learn patience from someone just telling them to be patient. They may learn it through an experience or multiple experiences where when they rushed into things or was impatient with someone, it turned out badly. Eventually, they learn it may be better to take their time and do it right. These INspires are far more valuable than words alone. Ironically it is often through suffering that the greatest lessons are learned. We also find the greatest teachers of these lessons are found through family, friends, with finances, health, and work.

There is another itan (story) about Orunmila seeking to marry someone else and how he “suffered” or was tested before he could have the wife he sought. Princess Wuraola in Iwo town sought a good and patient husband. Her father announced she would be accepting suitors to seek her hand in marriage. Princess Wuraola devised a plan to test the suitors to determine their worthiness for her hand. Many tried to do so and brought gifts and tried to woo

her. . Sango, Ogun were among them. Princess Wuraola, however treated them with disdain and insults. Each left in anger from her rude behaviors and conduct.

Orunmila decided to consult Ifa prior to going to Iwo town to seek her hand. Ifa revealed that he should be patient and not allow himself to become angry. He must endure her behaviors no matter how bad and if he did, things will turn out well for him. Orunmila left for Iwo town only to be met with the same disdain and rudeness the other suitors were met with. Orunmila, remembering the advice of the oracle remained calm and peaceful. No matter what Wuraola tried, she couldn't move his calm disposition. After a week or so, she changed her disposition and agreed to marry him. Her plan of finding a patient and calm husband worked. She was intentionally rude and disrespectful to reveal the true character of the suitors. Because Orunmila remained calm and unmoved, he proved to her of his ability to be a patient and kind husband. Wuraola became known as Iya ti mo je ni Iwo which means my sufferings in Iwo because of the challenges she presented for those pursuing her as a wife. That was shortened to be Iya-Iwo (sufferings in Iwo) and now Iyawo. Iyawo is now a word for wife in Yorubaland.

This story articulates how sometimes situations that can challenge us may temporarily appear to be a problem, but may only be a lesson or test for us to build character. By building character, we cultivate wisdom. Instinctual anger, indignation, or even fear and running away may not be the best response. In these challenges, it is helpful to ask, what am I supposed to be learning in this situation? What attitude does the situation call for to achieve my goals or get the most out of the situation? This approach helps us to begin to be more conscious of our attitudes, actions, and responses in our lives. It helps us to be more mindful of cause and effects and making

conscious strides in our lives as opposed to be only reactionary and victims of circumstance. It is these situations that we develop wisdom.

By becoming more mindful and conscious of our responses and actions, we can transcend the limitations of the human condition and growing in spiritual mastery to become whole. The process of becoming whole involves the awakening latent areas of ones consciousness, developing deficient areas, and decrease the areas of excess in ones consciousness. Becoming whole allows brings us into balance with nature and harmony with all life. Doing so produces into a state of inner peace and thus a state of spiritual perfection. This level of development calls for moderation in all things and no extremes.

Ifa on Moderation in Otura Irete

Tun ra re te
Bi a bi ni, aa tun ra eni bi
Amuwon Amuwon
Eni mo iwon kii te
Emi ni tani mo won?
Orunmila ni eniti nsise
Emi ni tani mo won?
Orunmila ni eniti kii nawo owo re tan
Emi ni tani mo won?
Orunmila ni eniti ko je jale
Emi ni tani mo won?
Orunmila ni eniti kii je gbese rekoja
Emi ni tani mo won?
Orunmila ni eniti kii mu oti

Eniti ko je dale ore
Ojikutukutu banu ara re siro nitori ise re
Ninu egun niny iso mariwo ope yo ri soke
Amuwon ni ameso

Reconstruct yourself

If we are given birth, we should bring ourselves into being again

The Balanced person. The moderate person.

One who knows moderation will not fall into disgrace

I ask, "who knows moderation?"

Orunmila says, "one who does not squander money"

I ask, "who knows moderation?"

Orunmila says, "one who dares not steal"

I ask, "who knows moderation?"

Orunmila says, "one who does not owe excessive debts"

I ask, "who knows moderation?"

Orunmila says, "one who does not drink liquor"

One who does not break commitments to a friend

One who wakes early in the morning, meditates, and thinks deeply
about one's actions

From among the thorns and thistles, the palm leaf emerges pointing
upward

A balanced person is an ameso, one who is truly thoughtful in
conduct.

Ifa supports this process by helping us to become aware of situations
or problems we may be facing and potential solutions to either
prevent negative outcomes or to achieve our ultimate goals. It helps
us to identify those areas of deficiency and excess that may be
causing us problems. When a person receives a Dafa (Ifa

Divination) they will be told what forces of nature or other spiritual energies are out of balance. They will be told taboos and behaviors that must be avoided. They will be told specific attitudes they must have to maximize their situation. They will be given solutions and remedies to counter negativity or restore balance.

As we practice Ifa as a spiritual path, we further cultivate our weak areas into strength and minimize our excesses into balance through our work with Orisa as forces of Nature. As primordial forces of nature we can find nature inside of us as well. Some show up very strong. Others show up weak. So Ifa can help to bring wholeness by balancing all of the forces of nature inside of us. Within the Odu corpus, are all of the Orisa which is why when consulting, solutions may be found with any of them. When wholeness is reached, a fully integrated personality emerges. We stop being a slave to the human condition and are able to become aware of a greater awareness. From that point one is able to reach the state of the witness self which is able to detach from personal interest alone and do what needs to be done at any moment. This is how one develops wisdom.

Wisdom sends us on an inner journey of consciousness through self mastery. Self mastery calls for us to take full responsibility for our lives... good, bad, and ugly, and full responsibility to our actions and responses. By doing so, we are able to find a progressive sense of peace.

Irosun Iwori on Self Mastery and character

Let's do things with joy. Those who wish to go may go. Those who wish to return may return. Definitely, human beings have been chosen to bring good fortune to the world.

Omniscience, the diviner of Orunmila, divined Ifa for Orunmila, who was told that human beings would come and ask him a particular question. He was advised to offer a sacrifice . Orunmila heeded the advice and performed the sacrifice. One day, all kinds of people, including robbers and other evildoers, gathered themselves together and went to Orunmila' to complain that they were "tired of going back and forth to Earth, Orunmila! Please allow us to take refuge in heaven." Orunmila said they could not avoid going to and coming back from the Earth until they had attained the good position that Oduduwa had ordained for every individual; only then could they reside in heaven. They asked, "What is the good position?"

Orunmila asked them to confess their ignorance. They said, "We are ignorant and would like to be given knowledge by Olodumare (olu wa)."

*Orunmila said: The good position is the world. A world in which there will be full knowledge of all things, joy everywhere, life without anxiety or fear of enemies, attack from snakes or other dangerous animals, without fear of death, disease, litigation, losses, danger of accidents from water and fire, without the fear of misery or poverty, **because of your inner power, good character, and wisdom.** When you refrain from stealing because of the hardship the owner suffers and the disgrace with which this behavior is treated in the presence of Odudua and other good spirits in heaven, who are always friendly and often wish us well. These forces can turn their backs on you and allow you to return to the darkness of the world.*

*Bear in mind that you will not receive any favors, and whatever is stolen will be repaid. All evil acts have their repercussions. Individually, what will be needed to attain the good position is: **wisdom that can adequately govern the world as a whole;***

sacrifice or cultivating the habit of doing good to the poor or those who need your help; desire to increase the world's prosperity rather than destroy it. People will continue to go to heaven and return to Earth after death until everyone attains the good position. There are a lot of good things in heaven that are still not available on Earth and will be obtained in due course. When all the children of Odudua are gathered together, those selected to transfer the good things to the world are called eniyan, or ascended human beings.

This passage speaks to mastery of self and self sabotaging behaviors that lead to undesirable states. This is why commitment to self mastery is critical to ultimate success not just in life but for the elevation of the world.. Many people think that learning Ifa is about learning divination and worshipping orisa. Others think it's about attaining power, wealth. Others perceive it to be a way to master life or build community. The above passage helps us to understand that as we strive to create a better world, everyone can get what they are looking for.

- Everyone wants to be loved and accepted
- Everyone wants to be free from fears
- Everyone seeks greater connection with their source.
- Everyone wants an over all sense of a well being, physically, mentally, emotionally.

Through inner work on ourselves, we can achieve these things. So in mastering ourselves, we are able to ascend. Ascension evolves us to higher levels of being. Eniyan are ascended humans. It is often translated as human only, but there are two definitions. The other is chosen ones who are perfect humans or evolved. Orisa are ascended or elevated beings. As Orisa, were once human beings, we too have

the ability to become Orisa through massive spiritual development. This is the work that Odudua has ordained for every individual. It may take many lifetimes of work...as this level of mastery is not just outer experience but inner transformation through extensive lessons each time we come.

The goal is to, as souls, master the human condition... Being in the world of Aye without succumbing to its outer trappings. Trappings often motivated by those attachments and negative emotions and thoughts spoken of earlier. Thus, we reincarnate over and again for thousands of years trying to reach the goal. Reincarnation is called *atunwa* in Yoruba. As mentioned in the above Odu Ifa, this is why we have to keep coming back and forth to the Earth ie reincarnating here.

Psychology of Healing and Character Development

This brings us to exploring of how we begin the process of attaining the good position mentioned in the above passage. It would seem that people should just “act right” to attain it. It would be nice, but we have to realize people are products of their environment and personal experiences. By extension , how they behave comes more from environment than ideals set by society.

Many people experience trauma, disappointment, even tragedy that creates inner pain. People displaying what we consider to be poor character is often expressing such from some pain they have inside. The adage that hurt people hurt people applies more than ever. Because the pain is coming from an inner place, whether conscious or unconscious, general shaming and finger pointing is not going to

correct that behavior. The correction must come through an inner process that engages their own motivation to change and heal from that pain.

So in order to explore what it takes to develop good character, you have to examine what it takes to heal from trauma. To do that, we have to gain a greater understanding of what influences character.

Inner Healing through the Four Pillars of Iwa

After years of working with students and clients, I have come to notice that in order for people to change their character, they have to also heal from issues rooted in poor character. To do that we must address healing from a soul level, and not just physical level. The process that emerged out of my work with them can be expressed in a model of Iwa that addresses 4 main areas of healing.

These are what I have come to call the 4 pillars of Iwa. The 4 major influences on character are Ori, Egun, Egbe, and Orisa.

Ori relates to your soul path and lessons that determine destiny. As a soul, you chose to be born to experience a life. As a part of that choice were other choices that related to what body you would incarnate into, and what environment you would grow up in. Other choices like life lessons, soul purpose, and opportunities were also involved. These are the kind of things that influence a person's perception and experience of the world along with their perceived place in it.

Egun relates to your family influences and inherited traits. In addition exploring the family you were born into are the physical qualities and family culture .The bloodline can hold inherited

trauma as well as certain tendencies. People where there may have been a history of abuse in the family is likely to have to address those issues in their own character or personalities. Egun involves healing generational curses and accentuating generational gifts in the bloodline.

Egbe relates to the soul groups and affiliations you have that influence your character. There are many different kinds of Egbes or group affiliations in the spiritual realm. Understanding the influence of those soul group on the person living a human life helps greatly in comprehending why certain people do certain things. For example, there is an Egbe that is associated with stealing. Some people, just have a tendency to collect items that are not theirs. It could be that it is from an Egbe influence. Culture, racial, ethnic groups, and peer groups on Earth can also fall under Egbe and influence how we experience the world as well.

Orisa involve the natural temperaments and qualities that may be lacking or over developed in the person. They may express in archetypal psychologies or intelligences. Our bodies are made of organic material from nature. That organic make up from outer nature, influences our inner nature.

Future chapters will explore these pillars in depth so that we can begin to explore how to heal and by extension build character. To give you a foundation of exploring , we can begin by looking at the path of a soul from Orun to Aye or from the spiritual real to the material realm.

The Human Condition

Every soul starts out as an immortal being in a sea of other immortal

beings in Orun. That soul knows only oneness and that we are all connected. That experience is associated with love. One consciousness and a sense of connection. Once we decide to come to Earth, we choose some parents to come through. As a soul, we are connected through the blood and the umbilical cord. The child doesn't know the difference between itself and its mother whose body it has been formed from. As the child grows, it is born into the world and into a physical body. It is only at the point of birth does the soul experience what separation feels like. Separation can bring feelings of vulnerability.

Once here, the senses are the first thing to develop. Taste, smell, touch, smell, and sight. It begins to receive a flood of experiences and impressions via its senses. The senses are an extension of the nervous system and an endocrine system. These relate directly to our thoughts and our emotions. They are bridged together in the brain's hippocampus influencing our perceptions of our reality.

These systems place great value on our senses and the need to satisfy them by any means. While our senses can also offer warnings of danger such as pain when an injury has occurred, most of the time senses just want things to feel good, taste, good, look good, sound good, and smell good. So it is pleasure and sensory stimulation that our senses seek. Simultaneously, it seeks to avoid pain at all costs. Withholding the stimuli associated with pleasure creates the perception of pain, discomfort, or suffering. These perceptions produce inner programs that influence our drives and desires as well as our fears.

During the first 16 years, a person determines most of our core beliefs. It determines whether it feels safe or not and whether the world is for them or against them. It determines if it feels loved and

supported or not. It has also made certain judgments about people and if they are good or bad.

Based on its perceptions of pleasure and pain, it also has determined good or evil based on the same criteria. It has also formed a fundamental basis that it will interact with the world whether through manipulation, or through honesty, aggressively or passively. They have determined what brings them rewards or challenges. What brings them acknowledgement, attention, or admonishment. The self image and identity is developed. Most people's behaviors and attitudes have to do with these core beliefs and their identity . It creates an outer persona shaped by these impressions that we mistake for our true identity. We begin to believe that we are our thoughts, our emotions, our bodies, our status, or outer image when those are really just imprints formed on to us by the experiences of our human condition.

Identifying ourselves as our human condition will never lead to enlightenment because the body does not have the same agenda as the soul. The soul seeks growth and evolution beyond this lifetime. The body seeks pleasure of the senses and instant gratification. The ancients referred to this mental state as being enslaved to the human condition.

Enslavement was a reference to being attached. When we are too attached, we tend to relinquish our ability to choose and thus feel powerless to change. With attachment comes expectations. Those expectations lead our need to control which is motivated by the fear that we may not get what we want. It is this kind of fear that makes us impatient and many undesirable character traits come from this kind of core fear. It is because of these insatiable states that lead to discontent, disharmony, anxiety and depression. Often in an effort

to relieve them, we act out in anger, greed, manipulation, aggression, hate, etc. So fear, especially unfounded fear is directly related to poor character.

If we look at this carefully we can see fear is the root of most negative emotions and responses. Anger and Hate is fear that we don't have control and of the unknown. Greed and envy is the fear that we don't have enough. So when a person feels it they may manipulate or hoard resources to get as much as they can. Sorrow is the fear that all is lost or we have nothing. Shame is fear that we are not enough.

The Nature of Fear

Owonrin Odi on Fear

E joo re , e je o sa
Iwa wo ni imaa le won kiri
O da fun aniwonikun
Ti yoo maa beru tosan toru
Ooje hu wa re
Ooje hu wa atata
Aniwonikan , ki o yee sa kiri bi ojo

Translation

Leave him alone , let him run
It is their character that chases them about
So declares the oracle about Aniwonikun
Who fears incessantly day and night

Will you but practice good character ?

Will you but practice sound character ?

Aniwonikun , stop running about like a coward

This Odu reminds us that fear and character are interrelated. Poor character can produce excessive fear. Fear can produce poor character. We can see that responding to the world this way produces high degrees of stress and anxiety. Science identifies the human response to fear as the fight or flight response. This response was originally designed to offer protection when in danger such as being in the forest and encountering a leopard. Recognizing you are at risk of losing your life, your body's heart beat increases to send blood to your organs , your muscles tighten, your adrenal glands release adrenaline to give you energy, your nervous system is heightened all for the purpose of responding to this threat. You assess the situation instinctively and determine if you have the capability to win against the threat or need to run away from the threat.

The fight or flight response is a survival mechanism and it makes sense when living in the forest. But when you are living in an apartment or comfortable home in a town or city, the threat is significantly reduced and the need for that response is minimal. Yet... the body not only responds to real threats. It also responds to perceived threats the same way. It's the mind that determines if something is a threat. So even if you are not in danger, but are fearful, the stress impacts your body and state of being anyway.

In fact, negative emotions are part of what manifests Ajogun which are spirits of misfortune. Ajogun are said to control death, dis-ease, Loss, curses, paralysis, imprisonment, and afflictions. Our attitude can attract this energy to us or repel it. We cannot always have

control over outer things that happen to us. We do have control over how we choose to respond to it. That determines outcomes. As a spiritual tradition, we understand that nothing happens in the visible world...the world of Aye without first happening in the invisible world. While there are many aspects to the invisible world, the last manifestation of it before becoming apparent in the physical is the mental emotional. It is for this and the above reasons that as a part of developing spiritually meditation is a necessary practice to cultivate. Mental emotional balance is essential for wholeness

It's important to note in this analysis, that as we are understanding how these influences work, I am not placing a judgement of good or bad on the behavior. Nor am I confirming that perceived experiences are accurate or true. The consciousness is shaped in infancy to childhood. The subconscious registers the events before we are even consciously aware of it. This creates our inner dialog and programs. Unconsciously we begin to form a narrative of our life and self image of ourselves.

It takes a level of conscious maturity to begin to examine the narrative we have created for ourselves and determine if it is actually true or if it needs a reassessment. It requires that we transcend examining our experiences from just a human perspective and try to see it from a soul level perspective. A soul level perspective is going to look at a childhood experience and explore WHY as a soul, these particular parents were chosen or why this body was chosen for this lifetime. It will ask how might those things influence the soul purpose and destiny of the individual.

By examining the childhood from a soul level perspective, we can detach from the personal attachment to certain attitudes and understand how our experiences fit into a wider purpose. We can

form a new narrative of our lives and experiences based on a soul perspective. This helps us resolve inner conflicts about ourselves and others.

Workbook Exercises

Since the senses play a large role in our experiences and can propel or inhibit our experiences, giving them full attention can help to understand them and ,in time, master them better. These exercises require patience in that you must practice them over time to really grasp them, not in just a few days. So it's a practice in patience as well. Patience in the sense that it will take time and also patience with yourself because it may be the first time you have ever been asked to notice these things. Resist the urge to hurry tp get to the next thing and take time if you are a beginner.

Exercise 1 Taste

For the next week , consciously pay attention to your senses and their messages. For instance take one day and pay particular attention to everything you eat or place in your mouth. Experience fully the texture, the spices or tastes used, the aroma, the sound, of the item. Chew or drink very slowly and completely so that you can pay attention to every detail of the experience. Document what was different after that experience.

This experience can be enhanced by spending a week using no seasoning. Eat food only in its natural state. No salt, Sweeteners, pepper, etc. This exercise helps you to detach from the need for a certain taste and focus on the purpose of food... to nourish you.

Record your experience here or in a journal

Exercise 2 Vision:

You may do the same with sight. Walk down the street, park, in the mall or some other place, pay close attention to the specific colors you see. Try to even isolate a specific color like green or blue for a day and notice how and when it comes up. How many shades do you notice? What does that color make you feel? What about the effect of lighting on the color? Do this again for another color and notice any differences.

Record your experience here or in a journal

Exercise 3 Sound:

Listen to an instrumental piece and try to isolate a specific instrument in the music. Notice how it makes you feel. Notice the fluctuations of rhythm and melody. Notice what part of your body it resonates with.

Record your experience here or in a journal

Exercise 4 Touch:

Close your eyes and feel the items in your room. Again pay attention to texture and surface hardness or softness. Feel your own hands or your own body. Feel the grooves and the different textures. Do you feel warm or cold? Do you feel safe or unsure? How do you feel on the inside? Do you have an inner prompting for something? A gut instinct about a question you had.

Record your experience here or in a journal

Journaling and Self Reflection

- Identify qualities that you believe to be good and upright. Explore how you came to develop them. Was there an event or series of situations that helped you to cultivate that quality?

- Explore areas you know for sure need more inner work. Examine how not cultivating this quality may have contributed to problems in the past.

- What key lessons have you learned so far on your journey of life? How did you come to learn them?

The narrative of your life

Go back to the exercises in the previous chapter where you were asked to write your life story. Look at the narrative you created for your life. In this narrative, who were your antagonist or who created problems for you? How did your upbringing influence your attitude toward life. Who or what do you blame or give credit to as a major influence on your life and outcomes?

Exercises in Patience

Because patience is a big part of growth, tools for cultivating patience is here. Patience is directly tied to attitude. Often the longer one has to wait, the more angry, fearful, or resentful one gets. This is the ego and triggers a need to control or take control forcibly. This can present a huge setback when done because while it may get immediate results, it may not produce long term results. If you are baking a cake, and you take it out too soon, you can have some but it may not be done and actually ruined. So trusting the process of things and learning that there is a time and place for everything helps. But how do you change the attitude? Some of the following may help.

Making yourself wait. This may be done by waiting in the longest line at the store. Driving the speed limit. Meditation and just sitting still is a great way to cultivate patience.

When you find yourself feeling impatient, stop and ask yourself Why am I in such a hurry? Take note of your need to control and ask yourself... What is that about? Identify your triggers and when you are most impatient. At work? With certain people? In what situations?

Question: When you act out impatiently, what kind of rationals do you give yourself for responding that way?

What could you do differently than responding in that way?

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Notations:

37 *Manpoil*, pp. 404, 388-89. According to Gedegebe, the various levels or kinds of soul known to man are merely stages in man's quest for God and their own deepest identity. The most obvious spiritual aspect in us is that which links us to our ancestors (the *joto*, ancestor soul), while diviners and a few others late in life attain to knowledge of their Fa-essence, their deepest destiny-soul, the *kpoli*. Beyond that dwells the infinite God. See *ibid.*, p. 386. .. *Ibid.*, p. 404.

One Fa proverb insists: "One ought not to put Fa on one side and Mawu on the other—it is Fa that one names Mawu," and several others make the same point (see *ibid.*, p. 31). For Fa is really not a person, but a process leading to transcendence and "at-one-ment." Several myths of the origin of Fa tell that in the beginning Fa was killed by the *vodu*, who were resentful of his impartial justice and truth, but that there arose from his grave, or from the parts of his divided body (Hainuwele style) the palm nuts used for divination or the signs making up the Fa system. Fa is the type, in short, of the redemptive power of sacrifice. Every session begins and ends with sacrifice, and initiation into *bokon* status is accomplished through sacrifices, etc. 40 *Ibid.*, pp. 387,399-401.

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Chapter 5

Orisa:

Living in Harmony with the Forces of Nature

Many people hear the word Orisa before they hear Ifa. The diaspora has placed great emphasis on the Orisas as an inherent part of our tradition. The concept of Ori didn't make it through the middle passage although some of the practices related to working with the spiritual head did. Because of the need to hide their practices within the Catholic religion, the idea of guardian angel or guiding Orisha became prevalent and most adherents became Orisha priests.

What is Orisa?

Still, If you ask a thousand priests, you will get a thousand answers as to what Orisa actually is. Some will say that Orisa is the religion of the Yoruba people of Nigeria. It is called Esin Orisa Ibile. This would be true. They would say that the meaning of Orisha is selected head and it's true. Some would say that Orisa is Obatala, the arch

divinity of white light. This would be historically true. They would say that Orisa are aspects of ourselves while others would say that Orisha are esteemed and specific deified ancestors. Both would also be true. Still others would say that Orisha are forces of nature and light issued forth from the source. This would be true as well. At its more literal definition, Orisa are human... in that they are selected individuals who are considered the embodiment of more primordial beings. How these individuals became the embodiment of these primordial forces is the question that we are left with. Some lineages hold that they were the incarnated version of the primordials. Other lineages hold that these were individual who came to be considered ascended beings because of their level of development and work on Earth.

The Odu Ifa verse in Owonrin Ose seems to agree with this definition of Orisa.

Human beings become Orisa

Orunmila said, human beings become Orisa

I said Human beings became Orisa

Orunmila said , “Don’t you see Ogun?”

He was human being

But when he became wise and powerful

He became Orisa

Orunmila said human being became Orisa

I said Human beings became Orisa

Orunmila said , “Don’t you see Obatala?”

He was human being

But when he became wise and powerful

He became Orisa

It is the wise that become Orisa

End to gbon

Nni won nbo

Eeyan ni Orisa

They only worship those who are wise

It is human beings that became Orisa

This verse suggests that it is spiritual development that led them to become wise and powerful. And that work is how they transcended the human realm to become Orisa. This is important for us to know because this speaks to our own innate potential as human beings to transcend to become higher beings. This process is called Ascension and in that vein, the Orisa who are ascended beings.

What are Irunmole?

But the Yoruba identify a more primordial consciousness that has always existed before the Earth was formed as well. Because it existed before the Earth, they couldn't be human in form. The primordials are called Irunmole, Imole or Imale and these are the timeless beings of light that emanated from Olodumare before the creation of the world. Solomon Omojie says in his book, *The Initiate: Pathway to Orisa*, that "Orisa are forces of light and knowledge who guide mankind in the way of right action." They control all aspects of existence on Earth. It seems this definition is more in alignment with Irunmole than the human form of Orisa.

Baale Olukunmi Omikemi Egbelade in *Egbe: The Sacred Tie that Binds* refers to Irunmale as essential elemental forces of Olodumare that existed before the planets were made... even beyond primordial light and dark. "They comprise the building blocks that make up of nature itself. They exist beyond Earth, but on Earth, Irunmole may come in the form of Water, mountains, rainbows, fire, air, oxygen,

stars, moon, etc. They existed before Orisa but are considered the “parents” of Orisa. Egbelade suggest that the Irunmole are like Olodumare and beyond human perception while Orisa are the aspects that are directly in charge of Earth and are the forces of nature on Earth.

Eji Ogbe identifies Mother Earth as Mole who must be appeased by all of the deities so that goodness may multiply on the Earth. (Abimbola 1968) . It is within the visible realm of Aye that the forces of light are able to manifest. The visible realm begins with Earth herself. The Earth, also known as Ile and Onile, becomes mother to everything. The esoteric Mole sect in Ife as well as Ogboni societies recognize Onile and hold the mysteries of the primordials . Therefore it is the worship of Mother Earth as the mother of all living... that was the earliest form of spiritual practice. It is from the Earth that all forces of nature that are called Orisa emerge.

Dr. S.M. Opeola confirms the formalization of the sect in his work, Ifa is not a Religion and a Babalawo is not a Priest, states;

The Odu Ifa Odi Meji records the story of how Esu, Obatala, and Orunmila inaugurated the first cult (a real esoteric cult) known as Mole. The Orisa Mole is called Onile or Apata in Ile Ife. Like Olodumare, the Orisa has no specific statue or painting to express her attributes. The cult was established to protect the traditions and the institutions of the ancients.

Orisa – Incarnations and Ascended Beings

In the diaspora, the word Orisa became synonymous with the primordial and Orisa became the default name rather than Irunmole.

When we hear some stories, it can be confusing because you may not know if it is referencing the human historical ancestor or the actual primordial spirit or if the story is an allegory for some greater truth. It could be all three in some circumstances. This is the nature of an Oral tradition. The Odu Ifa contain stories passed on from one generation to another.

The human stories that have accumulated were often from the recorded history of Oyo royalty who came to be known as primary Orisa. Each family and village had their own individual stories some with different names but the same being. Those stories were superimposed on to the earlier primordial archetypes of an earlier regime. As one generation or dynasty ends, another emerges with the same or similar energy for a new generation.

Because of this, Orisa are considered to have incarnated over several lifetimes. This creates the historical context and personalities for Orisa. The Itans (stories) in the Odu Corpus often record of individual incarnations and histories. The merging of the historical forms of a Orisa with the immortal Irunmole, created codified archetypes and personifications have we have come to know in the West.”

This is also where, I believe, the concept of roads and praise names for the Orisa originated. These “roads” or praise names emerged from the accumulated lifetimes of ancient priests or that Orisa. The genius of Nature has a way of embedding it’s code in the fabric of our lives no matter what. This is how we come to perceive it as embedded in our DNA and thus within us as the building blocks of our very being.

Orisa as the Wisdom of Nature

For the purpose of this work, however, when I speak of Orisa, I am speaking more esoteric than in the context of organized traditional African religion though. It is more broad than a specific place on Earth. Orisha's origins are found within the dictates of Ise and is an extension of Ifa wisdom as collected in the Ifa literary corpus.. At its core, Ifa is wisdom. Orisha, as a spiritual path, is the wisdom of nature. It is the consciousness and intelligence of nature and light all around us, and also within us.

Nature around us includes the plants, trees, and stones, the elements, human non human sentient beings, animal, spirit and matter. Nature includes the cosmic sky, stars, planets, moon and sun, and the trans-dimensional multiverse as well. The ancestral realms and dimensions of the innerverse. Ifa Orisha is the science of everything...and no thing. There is nothing it does not include.

The way of nature operates in perfect harmony with all other things. Without judgement, the mountains just are. The rivers and the ocean..just are. Within that context, there is always the need to hold things in sacred balance and honor the laws of nature. The law of reciprocity is one, and recognizes the need to give and take. The law of balance is another, recognizing that for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. There is the law of cycles recognizing that everything in nature has a cycle. This cycle is one of creating, sustaining, and decline.

We also recognize that nature is alive. That means it has some level of consciousness and sentience. A plant responds to song. An animal demonstrates feelings. Even a stone or gem can display a certain

personality that is unique from any other. The wind can be a soft gentle breeze that feels like a kiss or a raging current moving everything in its path. These characteristics become a metaphor for our inner and outer world.

While I am describing these things as conscious, it is important to realize that conscious doesn't mean human consciousness alone. Consciousness is often described as self aware. Therefore our level of understanding is dependent on how aware we are of the world around us. We cannot make assumptions of what a plant's awareness is verses the water believing that it doesn't exist because we can't understand it. If we understand that we live in an intelligent universe that knows when to plant seeds and bare fruit, ebb and flow of seasons, etc, then our understanding of consciousness must expand to include the awareness of the universe. That universe, at minimum must include the Earth itself. Our bodies are made up of the organic elements of nature found on this planet.... In the Ifa Orisa tradition, this would be Onile. Owner of this planet... or Mother Earth. By extension Aye... which could be translated as the manifested world or the visible world.

Our tradition also holds that Obatala first created beings out of clay. Clay is comprised of Earth and thus all of the elements of nature. Understanding Orisa as forces of nature , we can begin to understand its implications within us. Nature is both found in the outer world as well as our inner world. Nature is found the physiology of the body as well as our psychology. So there is outer nature and there is inner nature. Just as iron is found in the core of the Earth, it is also found in our blood and bone marrow. Just as water surrounds the entire planet, it is also 70% of our body. As the air we breathe dances on a rhythm flowing in and out, that oxygen energizes our being. The electricity in the sky is also the electrical impulses of our nervous

system.

Orisa as Our Inner Nature

Within nature, we are able to note seasons and temperature. This translates to our inner temperature as temperament. Our temperament is generally beyond cultural influences. It speaks to our propensity for certain dispositions. In Ifa, personality and character are directly related to expressions of temperature such as hot or cool. We may use the terms **itutu** or **gbona** to describe coolness or heat respectively. If a person is calm and peaceful, that person is described as being cool or Iwa Tutu. A person who is aggressive or violent is described as being hot or hot headed.

A desirable life is related to tutu. It is why we begin our prayers with tutu as in Ona tutu, Ile tutu, Tutu Ori.....

We want our homes, roads, head, etc to be cool ie peaceful. Coolness or Tutu is akin to water and a peaceful nature. Coolness is associated with feminine energy in that it suggests a state of receptivity and calming. There is no doubt the African American expression of being cool comes from this ideal. Being cool allows us to have peace in our lives and a measure of level headedness.. Being cool means that we don't allow outer circumstances and situations to disturb our inner peace.

Taking this further, we can begin to see Orisa as manifestations in outer nature but also within as expression of various temperaments. Orisa, as stated, means selected head. A selected head can have several meanings but in this case, it can be considered a personality type. Others may relate to it as an archetype or specific pattern or a way of being. Understanding that we choose our destinies prior to

birth and are given certain gifts and also may have certain deficiencies , we can see how Orisa may show up to support our lives. Some may show up as prominent character traits whereas other may require more development once here. As character building is one of the primary purposes of the Orisa Tradition, this is the crux of real Orisa work.

Because the overall goal is wholeness and balance, we are able to create balance and supplement deficiencies through working with Orishas. When one is hot headed and has a quick temper, one may need to work with Obatala to cool down and be balanced so that we can make clear decisions. When one's emotions are buried or suppressed, Olokun may be able to restore balance and feeling or heal imbalanced emotions. So when we address the orisa inside of us, our character becomes more balanced.

The Language of Nature and the Law of Correspondences

To that end, before we explore more deeply specific Orisa, we must understand one more thing about nature. The Ifa Orisha tradition understands that because nature is alive, it also communicates. Nature communicates through metaphor and its specific signatures or correspondences.. That is to say nature has its own language. In Indigenous Knowledge, we call this the law of correspondence or law of signature.. sometimes it is referred to as the law of relationship. That is that nature operates on the principle of correspondence where one thing in nature may correspond to another and there may be a relationship between the two. Another way to put it may be that our outer world is a reflection of our inner world and there is a relationship between the two. The relationship

can be understood by examining the signature of one thing and comparing it to another. Signature may show up in physical characteristics, sensory, or how a thing manifests. For instance, the Orisa can manifest through color, scent, people, or place. There may be personality characteristics that are signatures for how an Orisa may manifest. Esu, for example is often known by the colors black and red and crossroad areas as well as an elder man or young man. Also maybe by being a bit of a comedian and as offerings likes gin or rum and kola nut. So if you were walking down the street, you might notice an old man sitting down on a bench by a street intersection and he may be telling jokes and drinking Gin and Coca Cola. Because you notice this man is displaying some key signatures of Esu, you may need to pay a little more attention to what is happening or being said. Maybe you had a prayer and that elder man may say something that may appear unrelated but be the answer to what you prayed about. That is how the law of correspondence works.

This law of correspondence is also applied to Orisa when we offer Ebo. When a Dafa (Ifa Divination) is performed, the divination comes with both the root of the problem or spiritual diagnosis as well as the solution or spiritual prescription. That prescription is called Ebo. That ebo may come in the form of offering food, animal, or other items, to instigate change or support in the situation. Often people see only the surface of what is offered. What is not understood by many is that the ebo utilizes the law of correspondence whatever food, herb, animal, item is requested for in the Divination is directly related to the solution. It is a metaphor for the solution and thus offers a signature or language in nature that is tied to the solution. Those who are able to read those signatures become masters in understanding the language of nature itself.

Being in harmony with it means we are tuned in enough to begin to understand nature's languages and messages. We are able to perceive them through our dreams and quiet insights. We begin to notice them through synchronicities and "coincidences" that appear different but are in fact related. We see these metaphors through stones, plants, animals, colors, numbers, elements, scents, weather, atmosphere, etc. We begin to perceive them through other people and social environments. The more we expand our awareness to nature and her voice, the better we are able to be gifted with the support of the Earth. In this way we enter a living dialog with nature and learn how to communicate with nature.

Supporting and being in harmony with the Earth also means being conscious of the effects on creates on the planet. Respect for the Earth extends into every facet of our lives because we honor her natural cycles and our place in the cycle of life. We treat our food, environment, and each other as sacred. We take nothing for granted nor do we assume anything is free. We understand that everything is held in sacred balance and that to give to one thing means taking away from another. So we honor our prayers by being willing to give back in the form of offerings and ebo. We accept responsibility for what we use and what we do. We don't assume it is our right to do what we please on the planet as we are but visitors here. . We divine and ask what is needed... What is necessary to preserve and restore the balance.

In this way we establish a true relationship with Mother Nature rooted in care and respect for our collective home, Earth. All other Orisa and humans rest on her, are born through her, and return back to her when our lives end. The elements, ocean, rivers, the mountains, the metals, the electrical currents, plants, etc all derive from Onile. It is with this understanding that we recognize that the

Earth is a living being with conscious consciousness. Onile is represented by the Edan consecrated brass icon which consist of an elder female and male symbolizing the balance masculine and feminine magnetic forces on the planet. Because Onile is the Earth itself, she bears witness to everything that takes place on Earth big or small. She witnesses ever act and word spoken and because of that she is judge to these things. This is why the Earth/ Onile is often called to bear witness to the truth of a person or act.

Common Orisa found in the Diaspora

The outer manifestation of Orisa is in nature itself. According to the Odu Ifa Literary Corpus, there are 401 Orisa. The Orisa come from the 16 Odus that form a kind of tree of life. Each Odu brings forth Orisa and their stories to give us insight to our lives and nature. Out of these 401 a handful made it to the diaspora. The following orisa are the most prominent in the Diaspora traditions. These are presented to give a brief overview of the Orisa and not a comprehensive guide. Orunmila was presented in the Ifa chapter. These are other prominent ones.

Esu

Esu is the spirit of the messenger between heaven and Earth. The space between these realms are a cross section between worlds and realms. It is why Esu governs all crossroads in this realm and entrances. As a messenger, Esu is a linguist and able to translate all languages. Esu also is a divine teacher who helps us see. Seeing and Communication can be tricky though because our perception can play tricks on us. Confusion can result from conflicting perceptions. Esu will present our choices and also present the blessings and repercussions of those choices. Esu can help to create clarity in the

same way order is brought out of chaos. Esu becomes a divine teacher and helping us to learn what we did not know before. Ultimately Esu is the opener of the way to anything we wish to do. Opening any way starts with our mind and how we think.

Obatala

Obatala is the Eldest Orisa and most ancient. Obatala brings the white light and the fabric of Existence. Obatala brings clarity, wisdom and light. Obatala is the creator of humans in that Obalata give shape to the head and by extension, the mind. The immature mind can be impatient and not tempered. Obatala brings a mature mind that is calm and patient. This allows Obatala to bring a spiritual quality of detachment and pure consciousness. Obatala can be found in nature as a high hill or mountain.

Osun

Osun is the mother the rivers that are the veins of the Earth. The rivers carry water to the far places and allow for life to expand beyond the ocean. From the blessing of water comes the beauty of the Earth and beauty of nature so Osun is associated with beauty and creativity. Osun also brings the quality of love and sweetness. Love is not just a personal ideal but also a cosmic magnetism that binds and holds things together. It produces harmony and the music of the spheres. So resonance and the law of attraction come into play with Osun. Without love in some way selfishness and hate would tear the world apart. The world could not be established without Osun despite all of the male Irunmole trying. It was the love of her child that inspired her to help the male Irunmole settle the world.

Sango

Sango is the Great king and Warrior. Sango teaches us lessons in the use of personal power and therefore how to take dominion over our lives. Sango also helps us with leadership issues as well as fatherhood. As king, Sango takes on the role of being judge and by extension divine justice. Sango was first known as Jakuta, the stone thrower. These stones came to be known as thunder stones and so Sango is associated with the quality of thunder. Sango carries a double ended ax that becomes a symbol for justice because it cuts both ways.

Oya

Oya is the spirit of winds and storms who brings change and transformation in her wake. She is a shapeshifter changing forms into a water buffalo, one of her totems. She is a warrior Queen, not afraid to battle and said to be even more fierce in battle than her husband Sango. Oya is deep and complex in that she is the mother of the marketplace and brings business acumen to her work. She is also mother of nine with the ninth one being Egungun and so associated with the ancestral realm. In the diaspora, the extension of the ancestral realm and ancestors came to be associated with cemeteries. Oya's River is the River Niger.

Olokun

Olokun is the spirit of the Ocean. To some male and others female, Olokun takes us to the depths of the sea that is a symbol for our unconscious. Olokun is master of the watery realms that are the primordial waters of the heavens and Earth. The water is the oldest body on the planet as before there was land, there was only a watery abyss and the Earth was a water planet. These waters are considered

the ancestral waters holding mysteries untold. This realm draws up both spiritual and physical riches so as Ajelokun is both ancient wisdom and wealth.

Yemoja

Yemoja means mother of the fishes and so is associated with the waters. Her home began with the Yemoja river, but once the people of that area had to move, the Ogun River became her home. When some in the area were captured as slaves and taken across the transatlantic, she was transported again in the diaspora to live with her parent Olokun as the sea. Yemoja was said to have large breasts, a symbol of her ability to nurture many. So she teaches us how to nurture each other and ourselves.

Ogun

Ogun is the spirit of iron. From the core of the Earth to the iron in our blood, Ogun gives us heat, strength, and courage to overcome any obstacle. Iron is able to cut through deep bush and so Ogun is able to clear our path for progress. Inventions and innovators are all under the domain of Ogun. Ogun is a hunter and from hunting learned to study animals and so learned how to heal through the use of forest herbs. Between his association with forest herbs and also with blades, Ogun's healing energy can extend from an herbalist to a surgeon. Ogun as a warrior teaches us how to have courage and fight for what we believe in.

Oba

Oba is a water mother as well governing the Oba River. She is associated with marriage and keeping the home. The home is where

we all go to rest and find solace from the world. She was the first wife of Sango. Oba was a fierce warrior that even most male Orisa could not beat. When she finally settled down, she was a devoted and loving wife. Oba is most known for an incident regarding her cutting off her ear to secure her husbands fading love. She was deceived to do so and it backfired on her because it ended the marriage. As the eldest wife the issue of aging, time, and growing old gracefully is a theme for Oba.

Osoosi

Osoosi is the Great hunter, tracker, and magician. Can be found in the forest and represents conservation and sustainability in nature. Osoosi has a strong relationship with animals. Osoosi brings the ability to get straight to the truth of a matter as well as good judgement. Osoosi helps us find direction in our lives and establish clear goals. . Straightforward and direct in approach Osoosi also is the orisa of mysteries and finding what is hidden, unknown. Osoosi is a straight shooter carrying a bow and arrow.

Osanyin

Osanyin is the orisa of plants and medicines. It is in the herbs and plants that Ase or spiritual power is conferred to shrines, to initiates, to healing, to Talismans, etc. Osanyin is a master healer and teaches us the proper use of plants for healing and spiritual work.

Yewa

Yewa, Mother that will exist for all times. The everlasting mother, is Orisa related to Mothers Oshoronga. A warrior, related to fire; the owner of magical powers for healing and transformation is motherly and patronizing. Being aware of human suffering she always strives

to transform pain into joy. Blessed with creativity and sense of aesthetics she highly values handcrafting skills.

Obaluaye

Obaluaye is an orisa of healing and justice. This healing energy comes from the mastering of the manipulation of microbes and microorganisms found in the Earth. His power is being used for healing of any kind of diseases, especially the most severe ones and the ones, related to skin. Obaluaye is especially helpful during epidemics or pandemics. Obaluaye can teach us how to heal and take care of ourselves and one of my favorite forms of natural medicine, homeopathy.

Osumare

Osumare is the Orisa of Rainbows. The rainbow as a source of light also is a bridge between heaven and Earth. This orisa is also associated with exceptional wisdom and the conscious wisdom of creation. Osumare is symbolized by the python and particularly the rainbow python. The rainbow itself is reflective of the entire color spectrum of light in the world. Osumare is associated with great wealth.

Nana Brukung

Nana Brukung is a very ancient mother. One of her epithets is Omolu. She is considered the daughter of God in that her name means omo and Oluwo. She is considered the mother of Obaluaye and grandmother of all divinities. Associated with primordial earth, primordial wisdom and healing, she represented as a very old and

others?

- ❖ Turn off the lights and light a candle. Find a place to sit comfortably and place the candle before you. Study the flame. Just look at it. Explore its mystery and characteristics through color, movement, grading your hand close to it. Beyond the surface, contemplate how fire is used. What wisdom comes with its use? What building or destructive tendencies does it bring? How might those tendencies or characteristics show up in people or personalities?

Daily prayers and Performing Ijuba or Mojuba

Prayers are called Iwure in this tradition. They may be used for any number of reasons. Before any ceremony, we offer iba which is a ritual reverence to a higher spiritual power. Mojuba means I give reverence. Ijuba means We as a group give reverence. This process is a call to call in and honor the spiritual forces of nature , our ancestors, and Ori. This prayer is also used as a daily prayer to begin spiritual practice. It helps to start your discipline in Ifa by getting you accustomed to Yoruba and also helping you to begin to connect with spiritual forces. This is a basic one that can be used to start. It should be memorized as this prayer and modifications will be used in other exercises and rituals later. One way to help learn it is to write it out on an index card. Writing it with pen and paper helps more than just staring at it on a computer screen to learn it. If you say it daily for a couple of weeks, you should have it memorized. Don't worry if you have trouble with the Yoruba language. Just say it in English if necessary. Your intention is more important than saying it in Yoruba. It is more important to know what you are saying first than learning to say it in Yoruba and not know what you are saying. Over time, you can learn the Yoruba parts. As you learn more, you can modify it to your specific needs and use. .

Items needed:

A mat or ate- ideally straw or woven)or a white sheet or towel

A glass of water

A mat , white sheet or towel should be placed on the floor. Traditionally a woven mat is called an ate'. Kneel and place your forehead on the mat as a sign of gratitude to Mother Earth. This position is called Iforibale. Pronounced (Ee for ee bah lay). Iforibalè means head touching the Earth. This used in relationship to acknowledging the spiritual world, not other people. Other lineages such as have different applications but in Isele, this is reserved for Orisa and spiritual entities. In this case most specifically Onile or Mother Earth.



Say “**Iba Onile, Mo juba ooo.**” (Ebah Oh Nee lay) And clap your hands three times.

Dip your hands in the water and sprinkle some water on the floor while saying, “**omi tutu (cool water freshen the road)**

ile tutu,(cool water freshen my home)

egun tutu,(cool water freshen my ancestors)

then dip fingers back into the water and rub water from between the eyes over to the back of the neck while saying , “**ori tutu**”. (Freshen my Ori)

Esu tutu (Freshen the spirit of the crossroads)

Continue by saying:

Ope ni fun Olorun,

gratitude to the owner of the realm of the Ancestors

Iba Olodumare, Oba ajiki,

Homage to the Creator, the Ruler who we praise first

Iba Ogege, Oba ti ngb’ aiye gun

Homage to Mother Earth, who sustains the Universal alignment of all things in nature

Iba Onile

Homage to the Spirit of the Earth

Iba Elawori

Homage to the Spirit of purity

Iba'se ila Oorun

Homage to the power of the East

Iba'se iwo Oorun

Homage to the power of the West

Iba'se Ariwa

Homage to the power of the North

Iba'se Guusu

Homage to the power of the South

Iba atiwo Orun

Homage to all things that live in the invisible realm

Iba Ori

Homage to the Spirit of Consciousness

Iba Ori inu

Homage to the Spirit of the Inner Self

Iba Iponri ti o wa l'Orun

Homage to the Spirit of the Higher Self who lives in the Invisible Realm of the Ancestors

Orun Ori nile, e oo jiyin, e oo jabo oun ti e ri

The Invisible Realm of the Ancestors is the permanent home of the Inner Self, it is there that the Inner Self accounts for what it has done during the Journey to Earth

Iba Orunmila, Eleri ipin iku dudu atewo, oro to si gbogbo ona

Homage to the Spirit of Destiny, Witness to Creation, the averter of Death, the Power of the Word that opens all doors

Iba Egun, Egungun kiki Egungun

Homage to the Ancestors, I give respect to the realm of the ancestors

Iba Awon Iya Wa, Eleiye

Homage to our Mothers, Owners of Birds

Iba Esu Odara, Emi ori ita, ara Oke itase, ao fi ida re lale

Homage to the Divine Messenger of Transformation, the Spirit of the Crossroads, from the Hill of Creation, we wil use your sword

to touch the Earth

Iba gbogbo Orisa

Homage to all the Orisa

Iba gbogbo Irunmole

Homage to all the Irunmole

Iba baba, Iba yeye

Homage to my father and homage to my mother

Ase Ase Ase oooo

Let it be so

Chapter 6

Honoring Ori, and Fulfilling Life's Purpose

The odu Irete Ofun says:
Atefun-tefun
Dia fun Okanlenirino Irunmole
Won nlo sode Apere
Atefun-tefun eyin oni
Awo Ori lo dia fun Ori
Ori nlo sode Apere
Won ni ki won sakaale ebo ni sise
Ori nikanOnikan ni nbe leyin ti nsebo
Ebo Ori waa da ladaju
Nje Ori gbona j'Orisa
Ori ma gbona j'Orisa
Ori nikan-nikan lo ko won l'Apeere
Ko si Orisa to to nii gbe

Leyin Ori eni

Ori gbona j'Orisa

He who prints the chalk on the back of crocodile

He was the Awo who cast Ifa for the 401 Irunmole

When going to Apere (a state of perfection)

He who prints the chalk on the back of crocodile

The Awo of Ori who cast Ifa for Ori

When Ori was going to Apere

They were all advised to offer sacrifice

Only Ori responded by offering the sacrifice

The sacrifice of Ori had been abundantly rewarded

Ori is higher than all Orisa (deities)

It is only Ori which reaches Apere, the perfect state

No other Orisa (deity) can give support

Outside of one's Ori

Ori is higher than all Orisa (deities)

The ancients had a phrase that was paramount to the growth of an individual. Found engraved in granite at the head of ancient temples was the phrase "Know Thyself." When we see this phrase, the first thing that happens is that we tend to filter it through a western paradigm of understanding. We learned in the chapter on Ifa that our perceptions of ourselves is based on our body, emotions, personality, ego or outer expression of our being. The understanding of ourselves, others, and the world develops through the course of our experiences whether perceived as good or bad, right or wrong. When asked, who are you, most would say they are their race, gender, ethnicity, nationality, profession, title, or social status in life. Some may reference where they are from, a physical or personality trait, or special qualities they possess or have mastered.

We can be so wrapped up in how we manifest in this world, that we

can be unconscious as to the aspect of our being that is the operator behind how we manifest in the world. That is to say, there is more - a quintessential self that is beyond all of those elements that we use to define and describe ourselves. It is the part that operates our dreams, our heartbeat and our body's natural intelligence. It's the part that creates déjà vu and coincidences in our lives. It's the part that just "knows" beyond what the mind or appearances suggest.

Ogbe Ate says:

Iwonran Olukun
Abara le kokooko bi ori ota
Difa fun Ore Apere
Omo atakara sola
Nje ibi ori gbe ni owo
Akara
Ori je won o ka mi mo won
Akara
Nibi ori gbe nni ire gbogbo
Akara
Ori je won o ka mi mo won
Akara.

Iwonran Olukun
cast divination oracle for Ori-Apere
It is certain that Apere is the quintessence
of well-being.
Wherever Ori is wealthy, let mine be included.
Wherever Ori has many children, let mine be included.
Wherever Ori has all good things of life, let mine be included.

Araba Olatunji Somorin describes Ori as follows:

Ori is the immortal in every mortal, the Divine Essence of Olodumare in everything, the life force in me, you and all of us. It is the representation of Goddess and God in everything. Ori is the Essence of being, the personality, soul which guide and guard all of us even before we were born, through life and death and returns to Olodumare. Ori rules, control and guides the life and activities of the person; a spiritual element that is invisible but very active.

When the ancient scriptures spoke about the still small voice or the I Am....it's that one... More than that, it's the part that responds when we pray to our source. Ori is directly connected to Olodumare and therefore it is Ori that hears our prayers and responds as the Divine in us. Modern expressions have called this thing the Higher self, Essential self, Divine self, Super soul, Soul star. Igbo call it the Chi and their personal deity. Akan call it the Kra. In Ancient Egypt it was the Ka. In the wisdom tradition of Ifa, it is called Ori, and it is considered one's personal deity. It wouldn't be wrong to extend the name Ori to the ideal of the ORIGINAL Self. A popular phrase in the African American community our elders would say is to listen to your first mind, as in, "I should have listened to my first mind!" This is clearly distinct from whatever second thought we considered. We may consider this a reference to the Ori that elders maintained through the middle passage. The idea that there is something in us that knows beyond the thinking mind what is true and what to do.

In Western languages, the Yoruba word Ori is translated as head. Yoruba words tend to have multiple meanings and depends on the context and grammatical marks to differentiate meaning. I would be more inclined to relate the word head in this context as the "head" of one's life than the actual head of the body. This would differentiate how we relate to our brain processes and Earthbound

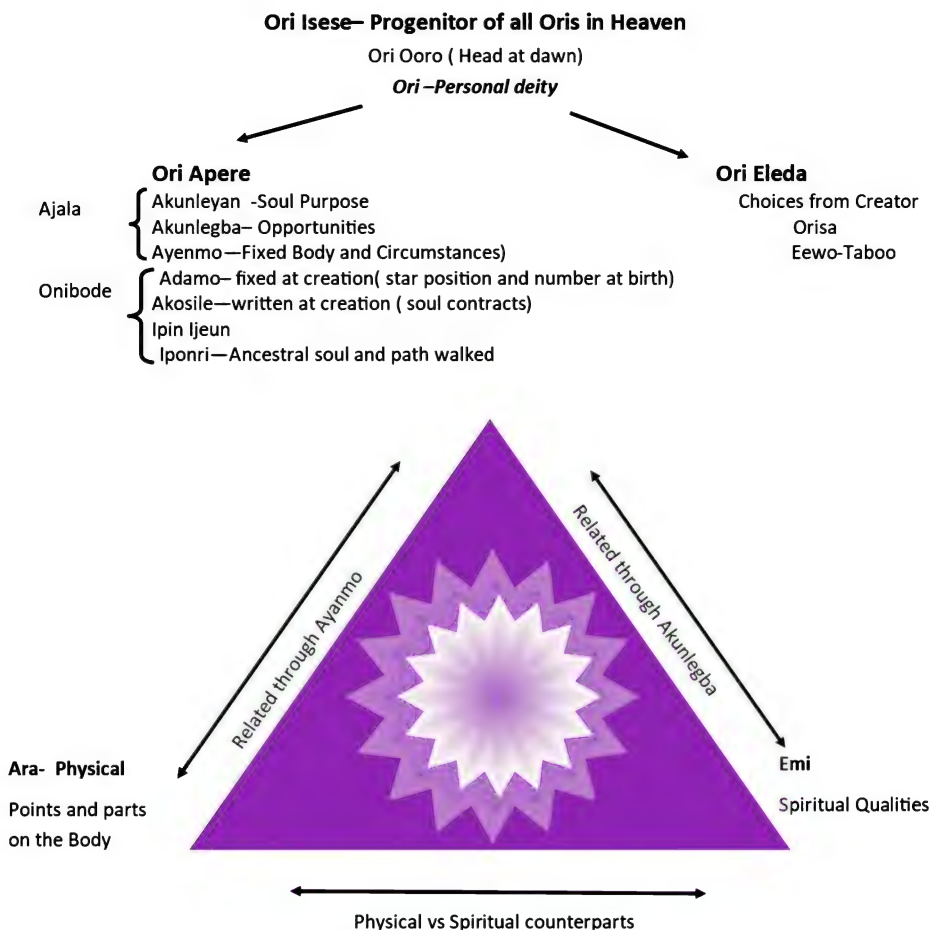
body of knowledge from that which is far beyond those limitations. In fact, when Ori is said in the context of Ifa, it is often a complex of operations and aspects that one is referring to as opposed to just one. Each of these aspects of Ori plays a role in our development, understanding and ultimately our elevation.

Spiritual Anatomy and the Multidimensional Being

Ifa considers the person a multidimensional being. We exist in multiple aspects in a multiverse. In order to begin understanding the different aspects of our being we will need to unravel some of the layers of its parts. There are three aspects that make up a person. The **Ara**, which is the body, the **Emi**, which is the spirit or soul, and the **Ori**. All are interrelated to one another and are interdependent on one another to work on Earth.

The Ori is the ultimate guide for all destinies and the Ori Isese is the progenitor of all Oris. This would be like the creator of Oris. The Ori that comes from Ori Isese is the personal Ori that guide each of us and contain the blueprint for our lives.

When we descend into the world, we are given physical vehicles or bodies to work in. The Ara consists of both the internal and external constituents which are oju (eyes), etí (ears), ẹran ara (skin), ọkan (heart) ọpọlọ (brain), eje (blood), ifun (intestine), ese (leg)⁴ and so on. They are collectively referred to as eya ara (parts of the body) The physical bodies have spiritual counterparts that connect body Ara, Emi soul, and ori to spiritual. Our lives on Earth is dependent on all three working together.



Ori Ode

We will begin by examining the Outer head or the Ori Ode. The Ori Ode is the physical head. The physical head houses 3 portals that filter our perceptions and connect us to the spiritual world. These portals connect us to our Ori inu , the Ori of our destiny. An ifa shrine is also called Ori Ode because it is the shrine that leads us to our destiny as the witness of destiny. When we consult Ifa, we are

consulting Ori. When we make offering to Ifa, we are making offering for our destiny. William Bascum in Yoruba Conceptions of the Soul shares the portals of the Ori Ode in the physical head are:

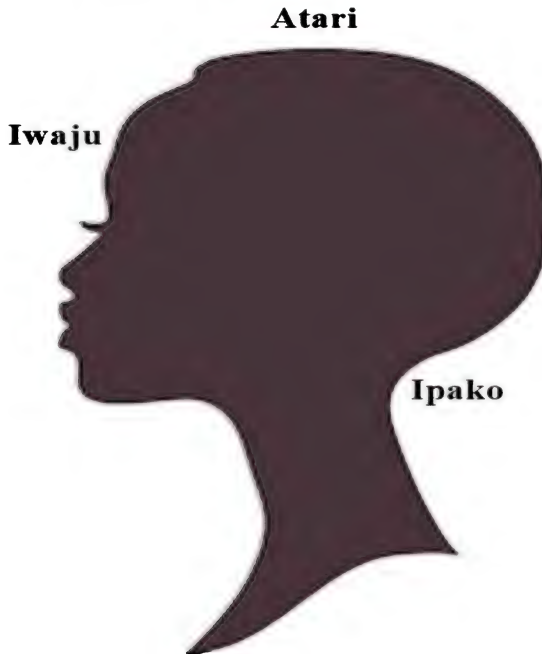
Ori Atari - The crown of the head and connects us to our self in the invisible world. This is the soft spot on an infant's head that is open.

Ori Iwaju- Our 3rd eye located on the forehead helps us to see spiritually

Ori Ipako- The occiput or hook in the back of the head between head and neck connects us to our primal memories and ancestral guardian soul.

Ori Ode– Outer Head

3 Portals of Consciousness



In addition to the portals in the head, other areas of the body offer a dual purpose as well. Each person also has an Emi.

Emi

Emi is the soul or spirit and is what animates the body and makes one alive. The emi relates to our lives through our mind and emotions and by extension influences our personality. The Emi, as the Spirit lives independent of the body. William Bascom in *Ifa Divination* writes that Emi can think independently and can travel abroad on its own in our dreams. Emi is often confused with the eemi which is the breath. They are related but not the same. For one, the eemi lasts only for your lifetime and leaves when your life is over. The eemi is considered the breath of life and is activated at birth. The breath is deeply connected to the emotions in that when we are excited or or anxious, our breaths become shorter. We can also find a way to calm down through taking deep breaths. Emi is connected to the okan through the blood. If we consider that the Okan (heart) interchanges with the Lungs where we breath, we can see the relationship. This is why it is believed that the spirit is in the blood. So the breath and the heart have both a physical aspect as well as a spiritual aspect.

Okan

The **Okan** is the heart. It is the seat of emotional intelligence, thought, action and spiritual power. The Yoruba phrase *Eri Okan* means the witness of the heart, referring to our conscience. When the phrase, “*Okan re ti lo*” is used, it means his heart soul is gone and suggests a person has no conscience. It is also where we carry our emotions. The emotions are energy in motion. They motivate actions. So the emotions that come through the heart are courage, love, joy, along with fear, anger, etc.

As an intelligence, the Okan is related to spiritual phenomenon and

direct intuition as opposed to brain processes. To compare the two, Okan would be when you receive an insight that says... “ Im inspired to build my own home!” The mental part through the brain is called Iye.

Iye

Iye is related to the mind. It is the Iye that figures out how to build the home and the details. The Iye is the accumulated information gained from experiences, environment, social strata, education, etc that you acquire that is integrated into your life. It becomes your persona and deeply connected to the mental emotional states of consciousness.

Ipin Ijeun

The **Ipin Ijeun** is the belly. This is also related to fire which brings up the metaphor of inner Fire or fire in the belly or digestive fire. Ipin Ijeun is related to our consumption of food. This is where character or Iwa is expressed. It is also where we digest things including how we digest our lives. It is related to courage as well, and the ability to withstand and persevere.

Apari Inu

Apari Inu comes from Apa (sign or signal) Ori (head) Inu (inner). So it is the inner universe...the inner person or inner divine. Apari Inu is related to our character. This is how we present to the world in the form of character or our persona. It influences our character because here is where our “drive” is. This area is also connected to the stomach and internal organs and thus related to our “hungers”. Hunger is not just a craving for food... It is our “appetite” for our lives... That is... what motivates us. This area is related to character because whatever motivates a person.. Whatever drives you , will

also determine what you do and how you behave. This becomes the center of your real intentions. It's the reason why many people may want to do one thing, but end up doing another... because one head says they should do xyz, while another part is motivated by an entirely different set of circumstances and the two may not be compatible.

Apari inu has been likened to the gut instinct and encourages us to remember deep inside. There are some medicines that are placed on the spiritual points on the abdomen that help with memory, protection, and intuition. When the points are tapped, it helps the priest to activate these abilities. When we hear people say, "I feel it in my gut!" That is Apari Inu. It is the intuitive guidance that is speaking.

Idodo resides in the navel area. As such, it is directly tied to our umbilical cord and by extension our mother and its connection in the womb to Orun (heaven), our ancestral lineage back to the first ancestral mother , and Olodumare. When we come to Aye..this realm , we come through the "Blue River" which makes us forget. There is a boundary between heaven and Earth called Omi igbabe. It is called the water of forgetfulness. It gives us the experience of starting on a clean slate.

Iponri

The **Iponri** combines the word Ipin which means destiny or entire path with the word Ori. It means that it is this aspect of our Ori that guides and supports our entire path in our life. It is connected to our ancestral soul as well. It is related to the big toe which by extension guides the path we walk. The right toe is related to the father's line. The left large toe is related to the mother's line. This is the basis of the understanding that where we come from helps us to know where we are going. Iponri also carries the Ase of manifestation. When

we take a step in life, the big toe is what leads us.

Ojiji

The **Ojiji**, according to Lucus, is the ethereal body and is connected to the personality of a person. According to Baale Olubunmi Egbelade, the Ojiji records everything that happens for the lifetime of the person. It follows you from the day you are born till the day you leave. Anything you do in this lifetime follows you much like the law of karma. Everything you, down to the tiniest of details counts and is recorded. The Ojiji is the witness for your life. The Ojiji does not survive after the person dies. Many people who have had near death experiences state that they see their lives flash before their eyes. It is the record the Ojiji recorded of your life that is playing. This recording becomes part of the permanent record of your life.

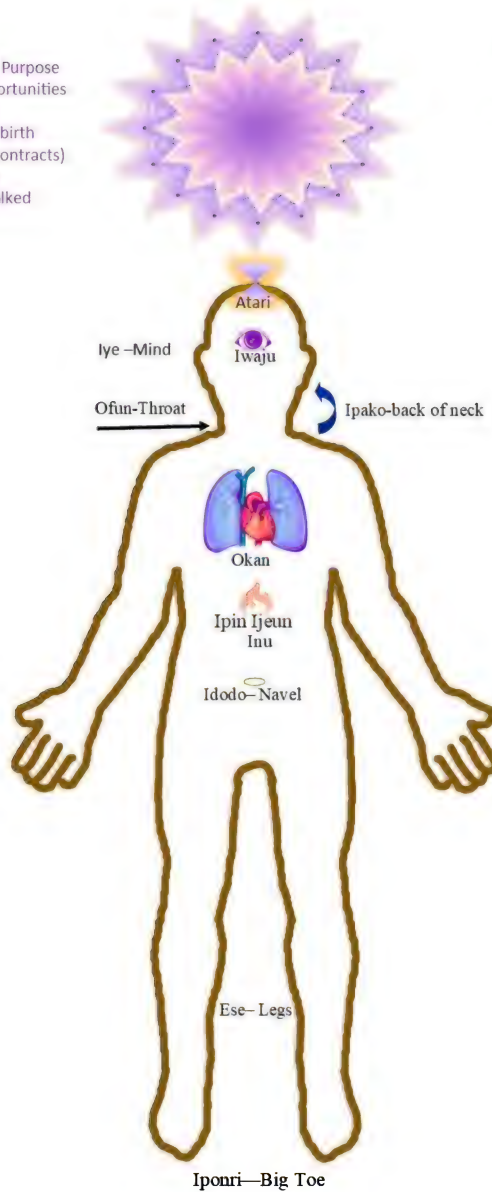
The Spiritual Energy Centers in Ifa

Ori Isele

Ori

- Ori Apere**
- Choices { Akunleyan -Soul Purpose
 - Ajala { Akunlegba- Opportunities
 - { Ayenmo— Fixed
 - Onibode { Adamo— fixed at birth
 - { Akosile— (soul contracts)
 - { Ipin Ijeun -Drives
 - { Iponri— Path Walked

- Ori Eleda**
- Choices by Creator
 - Orisa
 - Eewo— Taboos



What is Destiny?

Ifa tradition holds that before we are born, we enter the house of Ajala Mopin and choose a destiny.

We find this in the Odu Ifa Ogbe Ogunda:

A grinder makes three works
It grinds yam
It grinds indigo plant
It is used as a lock behind the door
cast Ifa for Oriseku, Ori-Elemere and Afuwape
When they were about to choose their fates in the domain of
Ajala-Mopin
They were told to make ebo
Only Afuwape made the ebo requested
He, consequently, had ire gbogbo (all good fortune)
The others lamented, they said that if they had known where
Afuwape had gone to choose his Ori
they would have gone there to choose theirs
Afuwape answered that, even if they had chosen their Ori's
in the same place, their destinies would still have differed

In the west, we perceive or destiny as uncontrollable events that will happen in our future and our personal fortune in this life. We spend half if not all of our lives trying to figure it out and bumping our heads along the way. In Ifa, understanding that a soul has chosen to come to be born, a divination is done at birth to answer some of those questions of the child's path. This will help the parents and the child to better know what needs to happen to support that child in their life so they can be happy and well. In that way, rather than figure out our lives when we are in middle age, we can flow in harmony with our lives and destiny.

The Ori determines and helps us fulfill our Soul's purpose and soul lessons in our lives. It's the part that when we choose to incarnate on Earth, the Ori is what determines the blueprint or curriculum that will be in effect. As our truest self, it decides to incarnate a portion of itself into the material realm to experience life in matter. It's that portion that we tend to identify with while we are here...while the greater portion of who we are has never left Orun or the spiritual realm.

An example, though rudimentary, likens what happens in our lives to how children play with dolls. We sit with them and create scenarios acting out situations through pretend. In this metaphor, we are the dolls and the Ori is the one controlling the scenarios that we act out. With that example, I don't want you perceive this through being a puppet... We do have choice.. That is what cultivating character is all about. So while the Ori determines the scenarios, our personal choices in how we will respond to those scenarios determines our outcome and spiritual maturity. It determines whether we learn the lessons or repeat them...or whether we achieve our goals or are inhibited. That is the part that our brain and innate intelligence plays. It accumulates information over a lifetime and applies it to the situation at hand allowing us to navigate through the problems and scenarios life presents to us.

I had a personal experience with my own Ori that helped to clarify my understanding of it. I asked to understand Ori better in my dreams and this is what happened:

I was presented with a dream where there was a mother and child nursing . Next to the mother nursing the child was a long vertical tube with three bulbs along it. A white light began to swirl at the

bottom and it swirled up in a serpentine fashion accumulating more light along the way and becoming lavender mixed with iridescent light. When it reached the top it burst through into a brilliant star or expanse of unlimited light... I was aware of my humanness for a moment as I tried to communicate with it. I was interrupted by a transmission of thought that expressed she wasn't used to communicating with me that way... The "communication" became telepathic in nature bypassing words of any language. It was only pure thought...and it wasn't fully my conscious thoughts.. It was my unconscious thoughts and urges being transmitted to this light. This light was feminine but there also seemed to be a masculine presence as well that was in the background. It wasn't what was communicating... only the light was. All of the things I thought I would ask my divine self became moot and disappeared as I was suspended inside this light. Mundane desires or goals were insignificant. I only remember being asked if I was learning? I responded.. I'm learning a lot and a sense of satisfaction was expressed back to me. At the end, I felt no separateness from the light...just pure consciousness. Then...it ended..I was awake and back in my body...fully aware of what just happened... But feeling a sense of separateness again.

My experience may not be what all Ori experiences are. It's possible it was expressed through what my own mind can comprehend. Another mind may perceive it differently. What it did for me, however, was give me a context through which to understand it...me ..better. If it also helps the reader, so be it. If it does not, put it aside for your own personal Ori experience.

How Destiny is Established

In order to explore destiny from a traditional Ifa standpoint, we need

to expand on the aspects of Ori, their function, and the nature of our spiritual body. To begin, we need to take a look at how, according to Ifa cosmology, we choose our destiny and Ori. The sacred Odu, Ogbe Ogunda, expresses how each person chooses their Destiny in the house of Ajalamopin.

A pestle performs three functions

It's head is used to pound yam.

It's bottom is used to pound medicine

It's body is used to barricade the door firmly.

Cast divination for Oriseku, (destined to die early) the child of Ogun

Also cast for Ilemere,(destined to die at their prime) the child of Ija.

And also cast for Afuwape, (destined to have a long fruitful life) the child of Agbonmiregun.

When they were going to the house of Ajalamopin to chose their destinies.

Ajalamopin is the immortal that molds ones destiny or path in life. It is here a soul chooses an Ori or destiny. This plan involves determining the soul purpose, soul lessons, and potential experiences. Once these things are determined, the soul moves on to Onibode which is the gatekeeper between worlds where the soul contracts are officiated at the moment of birth. The Ori or destiny consist of 2 main parts. The Ori Apere where the plans are determined, and the Ori Eleda, where whatever we didn't plan for is up to the creator.

Ori Apere

Apere means seat or basket. Related to Ori it suggest the idea of the seat of the soul. That which is highest and best as well as our purest state. Ori Apere is what determines ones fate or destiny. The implication is that it resides in or above the crown. Ori Apere is

multifold fold in nature. It consist of Akunleyan, Ayanmo, Akunlegba, Adamo, Akosile, Ijeun Ipin, and Iponri.

Akunleyan

Akunleyan ni adaye ba,
A dele aye oju npon ni

Translation:

Our destiny choice
Determines our Earthly life,
A wrong choice above
Results in suffering below
Otura Meji

Akunleyan comes from a kunle a yan and means to kneel down and choose. It encompasses those things we wish to accomplish and do this lifetime. Things like how long we want to live, the kinds of relationships and people who will play major and minor roles, your soul purpose and what lessons and experiences you want to have and learn about this lifetime. These can be chosen based on a number of things. It could be based on previous life experiences or the desire to have new experiences. For instance, if in one lifetime, the focus was spent on physical development of the body. The next chosen lifetime may have goals of emotional or mental development. They may seek to set up relationships with other souls that will help develop that... It may be a deeply spiritual mate who encourages spiritual experiences... Or it could be meeting very emotional people who force you to be more emotionally available.

When considering such things about what was chosen for our own lives, we have to take a more detached viewpoint from the soul's perspective and realize that some of our choices were made before we came to Earth. Other choices may be made on Earth bringing in

the impression of free will but if we look at certain things, we have to question if it's free will we are really making. More often, it is our likes and dislikes or our predisposition. If I choose a mate based on my upbringing, some of the likelihood to choose one person over the next is pronounced. We are often likely to choose people and situations that are familiar to us consciously, subconsciously, or super consciously. ... Often that subconscious choice is shaped by our past experience, conscious is shaped by mitigating factors in the present. Super conscious choices are choices made prior to coming. So choices are not as clear cut as they may first appear.

Akunlegba

Akunlegba is a kunle Legba means to kneel down and receive. By extension of the name, Legba included, it seems apparent that Esu also known as Elegba is key to our Ori and is intimately involved with our experience. Onibode is the gatekeeper between worlds and a form of Esu. While we choose in Akunleyan, we are given some things in Akunkegba. What we receive has to do with the opportunities that will be presented to facilitate those things we chose. It offers us circumstances and situations that allow us to fulfill or thwart our choices. Some opportunities make themselves known... Some opportunities never do. This is based on Akunlegba. Opportunities established in heaven may be planned as setting up a teacher to inspire you, or a job opportunity to show up just at the point you are ready to give up. It's the offering of a scholarship or someone introducing you to a potential mate. They present situations that could make a major impact on your destiny. Of course free will comes into play again because while the situation is present, we still have to make a choice to follow it.

Ayanmo

Ayanmo means that which is fixed. These are things that cannot be

changed such as race, sex, body, parents and family. These are permanent and also create part of our set up on Earth. Birth creates the soul contracts chosen in Orun and establishes the stage for our lives. **Adamo** is the fixed record such as the stars and cosmic birth record. **Akosile** is the written record of the soul contracts and agreements. Both of these records recorded in the realm of Onibode , the gatekeeper between heaven and Earth. This recording takes place at birth itself . The Iye is the accumulated information gained from experiences, environment, social strata, education, etc that you acquire that is integrated into your life. It becomes your persona.

We choose the body we intend to use by the parents we choose to come through. When we come to Aye (the visible world) we don't really have much control over the environment we grow up in. This is usually what we get from either our parent's choices and or other things and people around us. This can present a challenge for many of us because we are not always happy with our upbringing, environment, childhood, etc. In this way, you might find some peace in understanding, there are no mistakes and all has purpose. It's the set up we receive to bring about the lessons and soul purpose we established in Heaven. A person born in a black male body in the United States of America is born in fixed circumstances. That soul must work with that circumstance to fulfill their life's work. Because of that circumstance, they have established part of their destined life. Being in a male body, they will never experience childbirth. It's not in their destiny based on the body they have chosen before birth.

To make these ideas more tangible, explore the idea of a person born in severely impoverished circumstances. They may have a goal to

be a powerful business person as an adult . That is likened to Akunleyan. The poverty experienced as a child may drive them to succeed. They had no control over the initial circumstance... It was the cards they were dealt in life. That is Ayanmo. But those cards were the ones that they had to play to succeed. Maybe the school that they went to had a teacher there that would inspire them to develop a love for math or music. Here, again they are given an opportunity.. ... That if used properly can be a gateway out of their situation.. That is Akenlegba. Perhaps they perform a suggested offering as well... This enhances the likelihood of success in maximizing that opportunity or expands the opportunity to include previously unknown options that were also available. The all important factor about those opportunities is whether they take advantage of them and or if they maximize the opportunity to their greatest advantage. That would then have to do with their choices and Iwa, their character which we will come back to.

With all of the above stated, you may ask why would anyone choose such a hard life? To that, I say there are two ways to view who you are. You can view yourself as a human with a body and perceive your experiences through your senses and desires, aversions, and comforts. Or, you can view yourself as a spiritual being who has a body. The later requires that you think like an immortal and perceive your life experiences in a greater context. Awo Fategbe Fatunmbi Fasola sums this up perfectly in his article on Ori:

“Because life is not measured on how comfortable it was, but on the degree of honing of the self that was accomplished; The continuing quest for perfection; the elevation of soul.”

That places a completely different perception of what our life is about on us in a way that can be very healing. It reminds us that no matter what we have experienced, we don't have to exist in that

trauma forever. If we can tap the essence of the experience and perceive it as an immortal, it lessens the trauma and allows us to identify what the spiritual lesson was to help us evolve from the knowledge gained from the experience. This reminds us that our greatest self is still very spiritual and our human bodies and lives are very limited and temporary. When we understand that our human ness is not the ultimate truth of our being, we can release such an attachment to personal ego drives that can undermine our ability to fulfill our greatest potential.

So the Ori Apere has a large responsibility to help support the person through life. It controls our potential experiences. Through the records and agreements we establish here, the person is guided through. When we experience déjà vu, prophetic dreams, or serendipity, it is the Ori Apere that we are remembering what the plan was.

Ori Eleda

While the Ori Apere is the aspect of Ori that has the blueprint for our destiny, the Ori Eleda is the aspect directly connected to the creator and Ori Isese. Eleda means that which creates and therefore is considered creator. This aspect allows for the choices of the creator. Anything we failed to choose in Apere, is in the hands of the creator.

Eleda is also called Orise. The guardian divinity is also here and therefore the selected Orisa that may support your life. It is this part of the Ori that our prayers go and miracles come from. When we seek guidance in prayers, it is the Eleda that is responding. When we receive guidance or warnings in dreams, it's the Ori Eleda that is communication to us through the language of symbols and metaphors.

Akunlegba and Akunleyan also can be influenced by circumstances such as prayer, sacrifice, and ritual through Ori Eleda. We can have a good opportunity, but we may have some obstacles or situations that could prevent the highest opportunity from manifesting in the way we may like. It is here we may seek divination to determine what is the best choice, or we may need to determine how to solve a specific dilemma. When we consult with Ifa, we are consulting with our Ori.

Divination may suggest offering or sacrifice in order to gain the supports necessary to move forward or in order to open more doors of opportunity.

This is why we appeal to Orisa and do ebo or sacrifices to influence our destiny and outcomes. Ori has both the contracted blueprint and can also change or influence it directly because it is a direct extension of Ori Isese and Olodumare.

Shrine work, Therapeutic Ritual and sacrifices with Orisa can fight those forces and prevent, reduce, or change unfavorable conditions to be more favorable. Orisa work can influence outcomes. Ori is more important than any specific Orisa. Without the consent of the Ori, no Orisa can influence anything. In this way, ritual and sacrifices can fight those forces and prevent, reduce, or change unfavorable conditions to be more favorable.

Eewoo or taboos for living are also established here. Just as each person may come with gifts, there are also certain pitfalls we must avoid in order to maximize the life we are given. Taboos are specific actions, attitudes, or behaviors we must avoid. This may be related to food we eat, avoiding certain circumstances, etc. Failure to know or follow taboos can attract influences such as Ajogun (forces that bring challenges).

What is important to know in finishing this one, is that you are far more than what you appear and know. Based on the Ifa view of the full “person, you are more than your body. More than your conscious mind. You are a multidimensional being. Your actions, choices, and opportunities are influenced by aspects of your being you are not fully aware of. Your destiny is not so much about achieving some great global mission, but more about achieving your soul's purpose this lifetime, The ultimate goal of every human being is to ultimately transcend the body and realign with the immortal self.

Chapter Workbook Exercises

Home Ebori Personal Ritual 1

Praising and Feeding your Ori

Ebori is an offering for your Ori. Some refer to it as a head rotation. Technically it's Ebo Ori or an ebo (offering) for your Ori. Ibori is a very simple, but powerful ritual that can be done to connect with your Ori while ritually cleansing and feeding it.

When we are in harmony with our Ori, things seem to go easier in our life, there is less resistance, and there is a feeling of being guided by grace. When we are out of alignment with our Ori, there is often resistance, blocks, and difficulty. That is not to say there are not always lessons that we are learning and therefore things just won't be perfect all of the time. But, we can often sense when something isn't quite right or when we are trying to make things happen from ego and not from spirit.

One way to try to realign with our Ori is through Ibori ceremony. Often these are performed by priests on a person and it may involve more complicated processes and other invocations. It's helpful to know how to do some things at home however to help oneself. If the trouble persists, then you can go to a priest to Divine and clarify your issue for you. But here is a way you can begin to empower yourself for small issues.

The following are two different Ebori rituals for home. The first is a more traditional way as done in Africa. This one was provided

by Awo Fategbe Fasola. The second one is more Diaspora influenced but quite effective nonetheless. Wherever you see prayers in Yoruba, don't feel intimidated. Just say them in English if it is easier. Intention is more important than saying the Yoruba words at this point.

Why perform this ritual?

- As a process of aligning the Ori with Iponri
- As a way to reduce stress, or alleviate psychological imbalances (addictions, self-perception issues, etc.)
- As part of an ebo, as interpreted from Odu in divination
- As part of an initiation
- To counter a curse or spell
- To stimulate and increase our Ase
- All devotees should know how to invoke Ori through recitation of Oriki, Iwure, Odu and participating in Bori
- All devotees should know how to ritually appease their own Ori
- Ori worship stimulates and increases spiritual powers such as intuition, prophecy, mental capacity and inspired decision making.

It is also important to note that the ability to divine with Obi is a helpful part of performing Ebori, as you can determine a) whether an Ibori needs to be performed, b) what specific offerings your Ori needs and c) whether your Ori has accepted the offerings after they have been made. How to Divine with Obi will be covered later in this book. These rituals can be performed however without Divination if you don't know how to perform it though. When you do use Obi to divine for Ori, ask whether the Ibori should be toward the Ori Apere or the Ori Eleda. This will help you to better direct your offering.

OFFERINGS:

A list of generally acceptable offerings have been listed below.

Cool water - to cool, calm and refresh, especially to ease a “hot” situation

Honey to sweeten and bring joy

Gin - to bring pleasure and strength

Catfish- To navigate difficult emotions

Efun/ Kaolin Clay/ Cascarella- to cleans, protect and bless

Kola - to stimulate, give life, avert problems and bring wisdom.

Kola is a very important component!

Bitter kola - good for ase, also protection and longevity

Sugar cane – to bring sweetness and ire

Palm oil - to smooth, sustain & ease, also used for abundance

Shea butter – to protect and soothe

Coconut milk/meat - to offer a very strong cooling energy

Assorted fruits - to make one’s destiny fruitful, to offer nourishment

The simplest offering is pure cool water. Even when nothing else is available, we always have cool water and this can be used to cool the Ori, to ease the mind and to remove the “heat” from our heads. Often the head (ori) is also washed in a specially prepared Omiero made by a priest of the religion. Omiero is water with certain herbs, the combination determined by divination for a specific use in question. It may also include blood from an animal. A simple recipe for making Omiero is included in the Sacred Work chapter.

In addition to the items selected for an offering, you will also need the following items:

- Consecrated black soap (ose dudu), if available or Ivory
- Light or white colored clothing
- A piece of clean white cloth large enough to wrap your head
- A small white candle (tea lights/votives are fine)
- Some people like to spread a white sheet or cloth over the

working area, or on the mat from your Orisa shrine.

BEFORE THE RITUAL:

This Ebori ritual is best performed in the morning, before talking to anyone, but then you would have to spend the rest of the day indoors, which is not practical for many people so you can do it in the evening, at a time when you will not have to leave the house again for any reason. You should also make sure that you will be relatively undisturbed after the ritual takes place, as you will need to remain “cool” for the rest of evening. Before starting the actual offering, take a bath or shower. If you have any black soap (highly recommended), you may use that to cleanse your head of any negative energy that may have accumulated. Otherwise, Ivory or a simple pure soap will suffice. Relax and wash away the physical dirt, but also try to release some of the emotional/spiritual dirt that we all pick up each day. Take as much time as you need for this part, as it is very important to be relaxed when you begin working with your Ori. After your bath/shower, dress in the lightest color clothing you can find – ideally an all white outfit, including undergarments. Avoid anything very bright or dark. Go to the area you have designated for the Ebori ceremony. Wherever the ritual is performed, it is important that the area be neat and clean and free from any disturbances for the duration of the ritual itself. Place your offering items on a plate or tray.

PERFORMING THE EBORI:

In Ifa, all ritual follows the same five steps:

1. Washing – consecrating space. Water and incense. Sprinkle the water around and say the following:

Omi tutu (cool water)

Ile tutu(cool Earth),

Esu tutu (if you have an Esu sprinkle it, if not sprinkle the door)

Egun tutu (ancestors)

Ori tutu (cool head)

Ire Orunmila, ire, ire, ire o!

2. Anointing – objects, or in this case the tongue of the awo and/or person. The tongue or mouth is the source of ofo ase - the power of the word. Most of the time, ataare pepper palm oil, or kola is used. In this case, you would use the one for cooling which is efun. Just sprinkle a little on the tongue.

3. Invoking – Chants and prayer are an important part of any Ifa ritual, no matter how simple or how complex. Before beginning the formal ritual itself, one should chant iba (homage), oriki and in this case chants to Ori.

Once steps one and two have been accomplished, we must say our “Iba’s,” (homage) which are used to start all ritual:

You can use the Iba prayer found in the Orisa chapter workbook exercises.

Next, we say Oriki to invoke our Ori

Oriki Ori

Ori san mi, Ori san mi, Ori san mi.

Ori san igede, Ori san igede, Ori san igede.

Ori oto san mi ki nni owo lowo

Ori tan san mi ki nbimo le mio

Ori oto san mi ki nni aya

Ori oto san mi ki nkole mole

Ori ni ma sin, Ori ni ma sin, Ori ni ma sin

Oloma ajiki, iwa’ ni mope

Ase

Ori guide me, Ori guide me, Ori guide me.
Ori support me, Ori support me, Ori support me.
Ori support my abundance. Ori support my future children.
Ori support my relationship. Ori protect my house.
It is my Ori whom I shall worship, it is my Ori whom I shall
worship, it is my Ori whom I shall worship
Protector of the children, my inner character is thankful.
Ase

Ori mo pe o
Ori mo pe o
Ori mo pe o!

Ori, I call on you
Ori, I call on you
Ori, I call on you!

Iwonran Olukun
Abara le kokooko bi ori ota
Difa fun Ore Apere
Omo atakara sola
Nje ibi ori gbe ni owo
Akara
Ori je won o ka mi mo won
Akara
Nibi ori gbe nni ire gbogbo
Akara
Ori je won o ka mi mo won
Akara.

Iwonran Olukun

cast divination oracle for Ori-Apere

It is certain that Apere is the quintessence
of well-being.

Wherever Ori is wealthy, let mine be included.

Wherever Ori has many children, let mine be included.

Wherever Ori has all good things of life, let mine be included.

Remember, it is the intention of the prayer and the character of the individual that determines the effectiveness of the prayer. After finishing your oriki, chants and prayers, a general prayer should then be said to your Ori, explaining the general reason for the Ebori (coolness, alignment, fulfillment of your destiny, an opening of the way, peace, etc.) and asking that the offering be accepted. At this time, you should begin to present the offerings to your Ori. The offerings are always presented to the head starting with the “third eye” area in the center of the forehead moving to the top of the head and proceeding to the base of the skull.

Offering to Iwaju (to 3rd eye)



As you present each offering, you should tell your Ori the reason for making that particular offering. For instance:

Ori, as I give you honey for sweetness, please make my life sweet and full of joy.

Ori, I give you this gin to bring strength and pleasurable experiences to my path.

This should be done for each offering as it is presented to the head. If the offering is something liquid or creamy like shea butter, you use the middle finger on your left hand starting between the eyes around the eyebrows and over the head to the base of the skull. If it's a solid object, place it against your forehead. The offerings are not only presented to the head, but also to the navel (the place of the Ori Inu) and the big toe (a connection to one's Ancestors). Use the same finger for the navel and your index finger for your right

big toe. While touching the navel with the offering(s), one may say the following prayer:

May my Ori Inu always work in harmony with my Ori.

The offerings are then touched to the right big toe, and one may say the following prayer:

May my feet not lead me astray. May the wisdom of the Ancestors guide me toward my destiny.

These offerings will ultimately be placed on the head, but if giving a lot of loose items (pieces of kola, orogbo, sugar cane, small bits of fruit, etc.) one may place the items on a white plate until they have all been presented.







CLOSING THE CEREMONY:

At this point, if you have Obi, you can divine to determine if all of the offerings have been accepted or to ascertain if your Ori requires anything else. How to use Obi can be found in the chapter on Obi Oracles. Sometimes Ori may require additional offerings, increased quantities of a particular item, repeated recitation of prayers/Oriki, etc. if you don't have Obi, just proceed to the next step. Once all of the offerings are accepted, some (like the coconut meat, honey, ori butter, gin, etc.) may be placed on the crown of the head one at a time (if any items remain on the white plate). After all of the offerings have been placed, the head should be wrapped with a clean white cloth used specifically for this purpose. The cloth should secure the items on the head and prevent them from spilling out.

IMPORTANT NOTE: The white cloth on the head is very important, as it deflects energy away from your Ori. Your Ori is in a delicate state at this time and must be protected. The white headwrap or hat must be worn all day or all night. After doing Ibori, one must remain calm and cool for the rest of the day or evening (this is why it is best to do at night, before bed). It is important to make every effort to keep one's head "cool" and to avoid anything too mentally or emotionally taxing for the rest of the night. Additionally, engaging in any form of sexual activity is strictly prohibited for the remainder of the evening. It is important to rest and allow the ase presented to Ori to settle appropriately. The offerings are left on the head overnight and are generally discarded the following morning. Most people remove the offerings before showering in the morning. The items can be discarded or you can dig a small hole and place them in the Earth.

Another version of the Ibori ritual

Home Ibori Ritual no 2

Materials to gather

Blender

Whole Coconut)

Basil (fresh leaf or essential oil)

Lavender (fresh herb or essential oil)

Camphor (pellet or essential oil)

Cascarillia (crushed powdered egg shells)

Cheesecloth or heavy white paper towel

Large white towel or head cloth

White candle

Clear glass or bowl of water

White night clothes or white sheets

Wash hair thoroughly and if possible part into 4 quarter parts. Put on white night clothes.

Open the coconut draining the coconut milk into a glass

Chip some of the meat of the coconut out

Using a blender, Blend some of the coconut meat with the milk along with the cascarilla or Efun , lavender, camphor, and basil into a moist paste.

Take the paste and place it inside the cheese cloth or paper towel and create a bundle.

Prepare your sleeping quarters with placing a white candle and clear glass/bowl of water near the head. It can be directly above or to the side on a night stand. Light the candle while requesting that your Ori come to support you and clear your head.

Place the prepared paste in a bundle on top of your head. Envision white light being infused into the bundle and into your head. Say the prayers you wish to your Ori. Tie it down with a white head scarf or a white towel.

Lie down gently and go to sleep. Say any further prayers you wish to say to your Ori and go on to sleep afterward.

If the bundle should fall off during the night, just replace it gently on your head again.

Upon waking, remove the paste and sprinkle the top with cool water. Record any dreams or insights through the night. Do not rewash your hair. Allow it to dry as is. The ritual is complete.

This ritual can be done for 1 day, 2,3,5,or even 7 days if you feel it's necessary. It should be done when one feels blocked, confused, overwhelmed, unclear, etc.

Some other materials can be added to this as needed:

White flowers,
Kola nuts,

Honey,
Shea butter,
Cocoa butter,
Gin

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Chapter 7

Àsàrò Ìronù / Işaro

The Art of Meditation

In earlier chapters we have established that we are here to grow and evolve and that our Ori contains both the blueprint for our development as well as offers active guidance and support in our lives. We learned that over time, we begin to understand that the experiences that we have on Earth are intended to build our character.

We learned how character is influenced by several factors including our personal experiences. We learned how we forget our spiritual nature as we begin to identify more with our human form. We discovered how working on healing from our experiences can produce a happier life.

Another important aspect of character is found in the concept of Iwa Pele. Iwa Pele means gentle character. This concept is sometimes

difficult to grasp because we live in a culture where gentle is not always admired. Anger and frustration can create impatience and more aggression. Once this happens you have moved off your center and are prone to poor choices. One way we overcome that is learning how to be still. The art of stillness allows us to center and reflect before making decisions. Stillness settles the mind and heart and teaches us to focus on the matter at hand. It helps us to relax and relieve tension so that we can make good choices.

On Irete Idi says

Iwa Pele lokun aye
Fii ro petilowo eni
A difa fun Orunmila
Ti o fi iwa pele
Gba okun aye lowo okan le ni irinwo imole

TRANSLATION

It is gentle character which enables the rope of life
To stay unbroken in one's hand
So declares the oracle to Orunmila
Who by means of gentle character
Was going to win the rope of enduring life from the four hundred
and one

Àsàrò or Iṣàro- Meditation

The Yoruba word for meditation is Àsàrò or Iṣàro. Meditation is the art and practice of cultivating inner stillness that helps us transcend the visible world . Meditation helps us to reduce the stress responses and sensory attachments spoken of earlier. It helps us to balance our emotions and gain mental clarity. It calms the restless

mind and spirit along with helping us to cope better with negative emotions. These results help us to respond better to the world in general and experience more peace, more joy, better health, improved sense of well being in our daily lives. All of these things can produce improvements in your life and ultimately better character because it helps you to take an inner look at what affects you and your responses to it.

In the chapter on Ifa, we did an inner witness exercise that helped to tap a deeper consciousness that was inside but separate from the outer self.

This began the process of mindfulness. Mindfulness helps us to learn how to pay closer attention to our world. Meditation deepens this process by not just becoming aware of what we are exposed to in the outer world. It also helps us to explore the inner world even into the subconscious.

The Odu Ifa Iwori Meji calls for us to take a critical look at what affects us.

Iwori take a critical look at what affects you

If you undergo Ifa initiation (Itelodu)

Endeavor to use your wisdom and intelligence

Iwori take a critical look at what affects you

Awo, do not use a broken rope to climb a palm-tree

Iwori take a critical look at what affects you

Awo, do not enter into the river without knowing how to swim

Iwori take a critical look at what affects you

Awo, do not draw a knife in anger

Iwori take a critical look at what affects you

Awo, do not be in haste to enjoy your life

Iwori take a critical look at what affects you

Awo, do not be in a hurry to acquire wealth

*Iwori take a critical look at what affects you
Awo, do not lie, do not be treacherous
Iwori take a critical look at what affects you
Awo, do not deceive in order to enjoy your life
Iwori take a critical look at what affects you
Awo, do not be arrogant to elders
Iwori take a critical look at what affects you
Awo, do not lose hope
Iwori take a critical look at what affects you
Awo, do not make love to your colleague's spouse
Iwori take a critical look at what affects you
Awo, when you have been given Ifa initiation
Initiate yourself again by using your wisdom and
intelligence
Iwori take a critical look at what affects you*

The Odu Iwori Meji is known as the deep seer. The seer has the ability to tap the spiritual real and receive visions, messages, and insights from that realm.

Throughout the Odu Ifa corpus we will find stories of the Orisa going to heaven to talk to Olodumare and coming back to earth to bring answers. The process for doing that is not with a physical body but a spiritual one. It describes an inner process by which a person is able to access the wisdom in Orun. This is meditation.

Meditation can offer you opportunities to receive profound wisdom and insight in your life's affairs because it helps you to transcend the outer world of Aye and connect with the invisible world of Orun. It is there, you may receive messages from ancestral guides, Orisa, Egbe, Enikeji and your Ori.

Meditation however requires practice and discipline to master. Many people at first attempts have difficulty because of the restless mind. It seems simple enoughjust sitting right? However , it is one thing to say it. It is another thing to know how to do it. It is here that our self development becomes more important.

Part of what it requires is cultivating discipline.



We are reminded in the Odu Ifa Irete Ofun and in the verses on Ori that Ori is responsible for reaching the perfect state called Apere.

This perfect state is self mastery. The process of self mastery is not instant though. It is a bit by bit process and it takes practice to change the habits formed over the years and even over lifetimes. It is an **Ajo inu aye** ... an Inner Journey in the physical.. The inner journey moves you out of the focus on the external elements in aye and toward the internal elements within your being. Its best seen as a journey than a destination because it never really ends. Its a lifetime process of growth, ascension, and elevation. This is where the more esoteric aspects of Ifa begins. Because it's not so much about outer religious worship so much as it is about self realization and spiritual awakening or Ifayelele.

According to Chief Olayinka Babatunde Ogunsina Akano Kokumo Adewuyi of Ondo State:

“Ifayelele is the quality of spirit and mind enjoyed by Olodumare and the Irunmole/Orisa. It is characterized by certainty, serenity, wholesomeness and freedom from all that defiles, impurifies, taints, perturbs, and oppresses the heart/mind. It is a state of abiding positivity, joy, peace and clarity. It is also the state of being in which the powers of ones soul begin to emerge and manifest in original diversity. Ifayelele in its highest and most developed state is the condition of spiritual-moral-emotional and intellectual maturity.”

He also says:

“This is what happened to the holy sage and seer of Igeti, Orunmila. At the height and climax of this attainment due to many years of learning, perseverance, study, training, struggling, pondering and applying the inner heart mysteries of Ifa, Orunmila with great ecstasy, extraordinary wonder,

heroic victory and joyous rapture entered the highest, final and most complete state of Ifa consciousness, the fusion of his developing and perfect Ori with his own spirit/mind (Ifayelege).”

It is with this thought that we begin to explore actual methods for meditation and sacred technology for achieving these higher states.

States of Consciousness

One of the things that your journey will bring is the ability to pay closer attention to the world around you and your experience of it. This is determined by your state of consciousness which is awareness. Psychology understands that the mind has the ability to enter different brainwave states and this determines consciousness or state of awareness. They have identified 5 basic states we can enter. When a person is fully awake, they are considered to be in a Beta state. When they are asleep and dreaming, they are considered to be in Theta state. Alpha state is when we are deeply relaxed, daydreaming, and almost sleep. Delta state is when they are in deep sleep and completely detached. Gamma state is when we receive burst of enlightenment or flashes of insight.

In Ifa Orisa Spirituality, these states are states of trance and through them you can tap into the spiritual world of Orun. This can allow deep connection and communication with our ancestors, Orisa, our Egbe and our Ori. African indigenous spiritual technology determined several methods for achieving these altered states. The following are a few:

1: Orisa dance where the Practitioner rhythmically imitates the sacred movements of a particular Orisa thereby invoking the Orisa

. This allows the priest to enter a trance state once they are at a deep Alpha or theta level.

2. It can also be attained and or enhanced through rhythmic drumming . The Ifa Orisa Tradition has specific drum rhythms that are used for specific Orisa and these rhythms can facilitate an altered state especially when accompanied by dance.

2. Orin (song) , Iwure (prayer) , Oriki (Praise poetry) , Ofo Ase (words of power) can be recited, chanted or sang and this can facilitate a heightened state of consciousness as well.

When all three are engaged simultaneously and with others building a community crescendo of spiritual energy or Ase, it can create multiple trance experiences where the participants receive direct insights from the spirits. This ritual experience is a form of collective or community meditation. The methods for its facilitation are taught in person by priest of the tradition.

The methods that will follow do not require a priest but can be done by anyone. They are beginning practices that can facilitate meditative experiences. This is not a one time thing or exercise. They are not intended to be rushed through in a couple of days. This is a workbook and is intended to imply ongoing spiritual work in terms of development. One exercise can build upon another... but to properly grasp the depth of these exercises, it will take a minimum of months if not years. You should return to them periodically to assess growth. This is a start and a guide that can lead to deeper study and mastery later.

Exercise

The following exercises will help you to learn the process of meditation particularly for spiritual cultivation. Tools such as breath-work, inner listening, chanting will be explored.

Mimo Eemi (Sacred Breath)

We learned earlier in the chapter on Ori that eemi is the breath or related to breathing. We also learned that breathing is related to spirit... Emi. Recall also that eemi the breath of life is infused into the blood via the lungs which in turn quickens the heart.. Okan. Okan is spiritually related to our conscience which is our inner knowing. In this way, the English language is not that different from Yoruba. The phrase respiration which is the act of breathing itself, has contained within its word spir which is related to Spirit. So when we respirate (re spir ate) we are re- spiriting our very being. It is with this in mind, that we begin to understand the practice of breathwork.

When we are born, we know how to breathe. That is, we inhale and our belly expands. Then we exhale and our belly contracts. Sometime in our early childhood we learn to breath in the opposite direction contracting our stomachs while expanding our chests on the inhale. Then we expand our bellies in relief on the exhale.

When it expands, this is called the breath of fear because we learned this as an unconscious response to fear. Our bodies learned to brace for fearful or stressful conditions by holding our breath and tensing our shoulders. This creates a constant state of tension that blocks the flow of creative and spiritual energy in and through our being. The significance of proper breathing is that it allows for more oxygen to get to your body, its organs, and your brain. This, in turn, allows for expanded capacity in your overall body function.

When we begin to breath in a shallow way, it deprives our body of all the resources it needs to function properly and in turn the body becomes rigid and stiff. It happens also with the mind. Our minds

become scattered and we are not able to use its full capacity to solve our problems or be fully aware of what is taking place in our lives.

In addition, breathwork helps to increase spiritual energy in the body due to its relationship to Emi. Spiritual energy is often described as Ase or spiritual power. This is one goal of spiritual cultivation as it increases our capacity to heal and to effect our outer world. In order to prepare our bodies to receive spiritual energy, we must retrain ourselves to breathe properly.

There are 2 types of breathing I will discuss in this chapter. Abdominal Breathing and Alternate nostril breathing. Belly breathing, also called diaphragmatic breathing, is a simple deep breathing technique that teaches you how to use your diaphragm, a sheet of muscle at the bottom of our lungs and the most important muscle for breathing. Breathing properly will lay the foundation for entering altered states for meditation and later work.

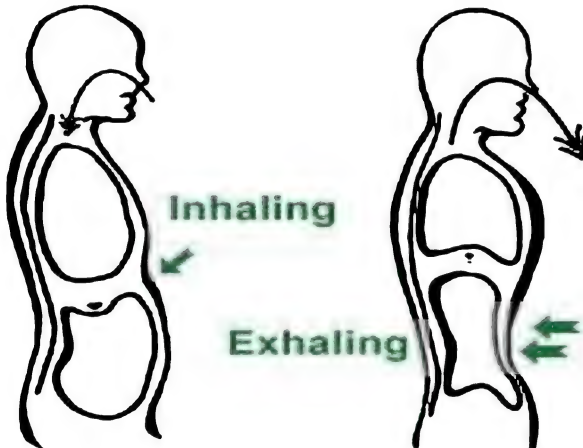
Abdominal Breathing - Emi Ori Inu

1. Sit up straight, imagining a string lifting up your chest. You should feel the area between your chest and your navel lengthen. Proper posture gets air into your lungs and helps energy flow through your body.
2. As you try to improve your posture, you may find your muscles tensing up, especially around the abdomen. Consciously try to release any tension from your body. Place one hand flat against the abdomen. Your thumb should be around your navel.
3. Breathe in through your nose at an even rate.

Allow your abdomen to expand, rather than your upper chest. You should feel the hand on your abdomen being pushed away from your body as your abdomen rises.

4. Count silently starting from "one". Breathe out fully releasing the breath and giving off a ocean wave kind of sound with the breath. This should happen naturally with a full exhale and should not require any further conscious effort. As you release feel the tension being dropped away particularly around the shoulders.

5. Repeat this 5 times or more and during times of stress.



*Do not perform if you are pregnant as this exercise may cause dizziness and lightheadedness due to the increase in oxygen to the brain

Journaling: After practicing for a few moments, write down your experience:

Alternate Nostril Breathing Instructions

This technique occupies your mind. All the holding and counting is absorbing. This simple activity successfully keeps out other thoughts, allowing you to get lost in it.

It is a scientific fact that your nostrils normally change dominance. Throughout the day, without using any technique, the blood flow alternates every couple hours between the left and right sides of the nose, causing first one and then the other nostril to become more congested, allowing air to flow more easily into and out of the uncongested nostril.

This shift happens back and forth every 90 to 120 minutes and is associated with brain hemisphere dominance. When the left nostril is more open, people test better on right hemisphere tasks like creativity and relational thinking.. When the right nostril is more open, people do better at left-brain tasks like verbal expression and analytical thinking.

Doing the alternate nose breath allows for us to create balance between the hemispheres producing a balanced mind. It can help with uncontrolled emotions and thoughts as well as calming the mind.

Instructions:

1. Put your right hand up to your nose. Hold your index and middle fingers on your forehead to hold your hand stable. You'll notice your thumb is on the right side of your nose and your ring and little fingers are on the left side.



2. Now use your thumb to plug your right nostril. Take a slow, deep breath in through your left nostril, counting to eight. Slow down your in-breath so it takes eight seconds to fill your lungs.



3. Plug your left nostril (so both sides are now blocked) and hold your breath to a count of eight.

4. Now lift your thumb off your right nostril (keeping your left nostril plugged) and breathe out steadily, through your right nostril only, for a count of eight.

5. Do not pause at the end of the breath. Immediately start breathing in and breathe in through the right nostril to a count of eight.

6. Plug both sides and hold your breath for a count of eight.

7. Now breathe out through your left nostril for a count of eight.

8. Start all over again, breathing in through your left nostril.

Breathe in and out as quietly as you can. This makes your breath

slow and even.

This seems a lot more complicated than it is. It's very simple once you've done it a couple times.

The Art of Inner Listening and Chanting

Chanting Ifa is a valued practice among many adherents. This involves chanting the verses of Ifa in Yoruba and reciting memorized Oriki. Some can be very long and challenging to learn as a beginner. Because it involves learning another language, I advocate for using simple chants for those in the Diaspora especially for mediation practice. Here is a method that involves a simple process to begin .

Preparation:

Eni or ate (woven mat), white cotton sheet, or White cotton towel

Find a comfortable place. Ideally you will lay your ate or white cloth on the ground. The ground is the Earth and alignment with the Earth's vibration is always helpful for centering. The word eni and ate refer to the woven mat that is sat upon during divination. It represents the interwoven energy of life. The weaved pattern is reflective of energy as it moves horizontally and vertically to create existence. They intersect with one another producing a crossroads between heaven and Earth. Esoterically the intersecting pattern represents the masculine and feminine energy or subtle energy and assertive energy. We lay it on the ground and thus it becomes a symbol of the sacred Earth because it is comprised of these energies. The white cotton sheet or towel represents Obatala or the white light fabric of existence. Either is fine to start.

If you cannot sit on the Earth due to physical limitations or do not

have a mat, , or cannot sit on the ground, it's ok. Just find an upright chair to sit in. One that supports the back.

1. Sit upright with back straight and shoulders relaxed whether in the chair or on the ground. Begin belly breathing as you relax and settle.
2. Once settled, try to sit perfectly still. When beginning, it may be difficult to sit still. Our body is unconsciously used to movement. As you sit in stillness, you may begin to notice all the little ways your body is being stimulated. . An itch. A pulse. Tension. As you do, just breathe in that area and relax. Remember to drop your shoulders.
3. Once still you will create a visualization of a white iridescent light just above the crown of your head. This light radiates brightly but does not hurt your eyes to see. Visualize this light descending through your head and surrounding you. This light will form a kind of bubble around you enveloping your whole body. Embrace it. It serves as a means of protection for you as well as a place of nurturing for you. It is a spiritual womb of light. Allow yourself to feel safe and comforted. Some may prefer to cover themselves literally with a white cotton sheet. This was a traditional practice by old school Ifa priests. It symbolizes returning to the safe space of the womb. It's however, optional.
4. As you experience yourself in the midst of this light, place your hand over your belly at your navel. This is the area of your Ori inu. Or just focus on your navel. See it expand with light. Allow it to form a string of light from within you and extend like a cord outward and connect it to the white bubble of light surrounding you.
5. At this stage you should be like a child in a womb.

6. You may quietly say m chant, or sing one of the following:
“Ori ba mi soro” which translates to Divine self talk to me
You are asking your Ori to talk to you.

Or

“ Emi Tona mi” which means Spirit guide me

7. Repeat this for a few minutes until you feel calm.

8. Then sit calmly. Sit as it you are expecting an answer. Don't try to do it... make no effort to do extra. Just wait as if you are trying to hear a quiet message. The voice however, won't come as a human voice with words though. More like a thought. The messages are often telepathic rather than a sound. The visions are more like a memory and sometimes a dream. The focus is to relax as if you have had a question and you are awaiting an answer.

Ofo Ase And Primordial Sound

Everything is made up of sound and light. Primordial sound is the building block to manifestations. It is the sound that existed before the world. What we speak, we can manifests. It is because of this, it is helpful to know how to use sound to effect a thing. One form in Ifa is through Ofo Ase. Ofo Ase means word of power. It is a mantra and means to channel power through sound. Using chants, Orin is a song or melody that can be song individually or as a group. Oriki is a heart song or chant that can be used as praise, invocation, or to stimulate memory. Using oriki, Orin, or Ofo Ase to begin meditation helps to deal with the mental chatter often found at the beginning of meditating. Mental chatter is all of the thoughts that come up in your mind when you are trying to silence it. The chant acts as a means to keep your mind busy by giving it something to do and focus on while you settle. It can be made aloud or in silence.

Ifa chant to calm the mind

Èrọ pèsè, ẹrọ pèsè niti igbin, ko romi pèsè

Calm, calmness is that of a snail, may I be calm

This can be enhanced by anointing your head with snail water or from a snail shell with water.

Hoo or huu is sometimes referred to as the true name of God. Indus Kush traditions refer to it as the voice of god and by chanting it, we acquire wisdom. It is the sound we make when in complete relaxation. After having exerted ourselves, when we sit to relax fully, we take a deep breath and release on full exhale as Huuuh! We are returning to the original state of rest. There are variations in how it is pronounced. For some it is Hoooo with a long u. For others it is Huh with a short u or Haa with a short a.

Chant to expand our Ori Consciousness

Ori Hoo (Huu)

Ori Gee

Ori tito n pe enikan

Ti igba n eni n je e

Sare tete ki o wa je mi

Divine Spirit expand... (An extension of wanting to open up to the all encompassing divine mind)

Honorable divine Spirit

Divine spirit that calls one and 200 answer

Respond to me quickly.

We find in the Odu Ifa Osa Ogunda, the sound in a creation story where Olodumare is alone and creates ogbon (wisdom), Imo (knowledgable), and Oye (understanding). These are the primordial

elements of creation and together they produce the sound Hooroo or Oro. They were symbolized as dew droplets from a snails shell.

Olodumare sent them out but they found no home so they returned and Olodumare swallowed them. Then Olodumare slept... but didn't sleep.

Seemingly sleep but awake.

Seemingly dormant but alive.

Eleye (the great birds) wished their wings against her face.

Olodumare never slumbers

Olodumare, suspended in a trance for thousands of years with wisdom, knowledge, and understanding as hoo, decided to let them descend from their primordial state of pure life force energy into matter. When they descended to Earth they emitted their sound Hooroo or Oro and it was accompanied by thunder and lightening (sound and light) . Once they descended into matter, it made sound of La.

This ese is loaded with references to how the sound hoo or hooroo induced a trance like or suspended state in Olodumare. The state of rest is induced in between breaths.

Okanran Owonrin on the primordial sounds of creation

Oro gbe nu agba gbin kin

Oro ku

Oro ke

Oro gi

Oro la

Oro to ja ninu agba o tobi bi agbe

A dia fun Oro-oro oro
Nigba un o ri enikan ba soro
Mo gba ngbin
Ase

Oro, Gbe (the cause of great concern for the wise and experienced elders)

Sound, “Ku” (making the heart miss a beat)

Sound “Ke” (as a ponderous object hitting the ground)

Sound “Gi” (making the last sound before silence)

And Sound (“La”, with a loud cracking sound is transformed into a new state called “Ela.”)

The oro that drops from the ancient is stupendous

*It was divined for **Oro-oro oro***

Who did not have anyone to communicate with and started groaning

This is the manifestation of Ela. Ela is the primordial expression of a Orunmila. Thus Orunmila is the embodiment of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. It is with these primordial sound keys to creation that we can access the wisdom needed for our lives.

Ifa priests often chant Ela ro! To call Ela to descend during an Ifa divination. Ela is considered light but here it is relating it to sound.

The chant contained in the above verse brings it all together to invoke a primordial sound chant that can induce expanded consciousness of creation.

Gbe Ku Ke Gi La Oro hoo

Oya Chant to stop mental chatter and cut off negative forces.

Yo Mo Ku Ko Ke

Da Mo Ku Ko Ke

I invite you to explore the variations and see what works for you.

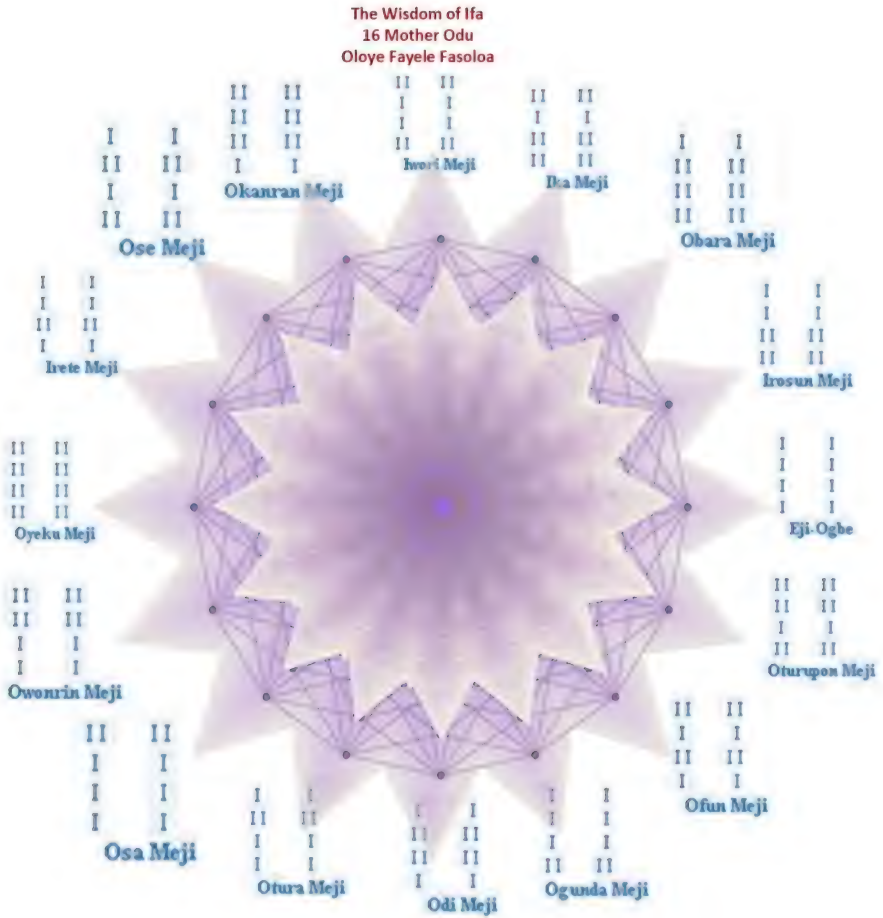
Lastly, it doesn't have to be done in Yoruba, it can be done in your native tongue. I have found however that doing them in an esoteric language helps to disconnect from the common world and shift you to a spiritual one. It's up to us though. It's important to note that the Ori doesn't use literal language to communicate. Language is a tool for humans to communicate. The Ori speaks through telepathy and or through symbols.

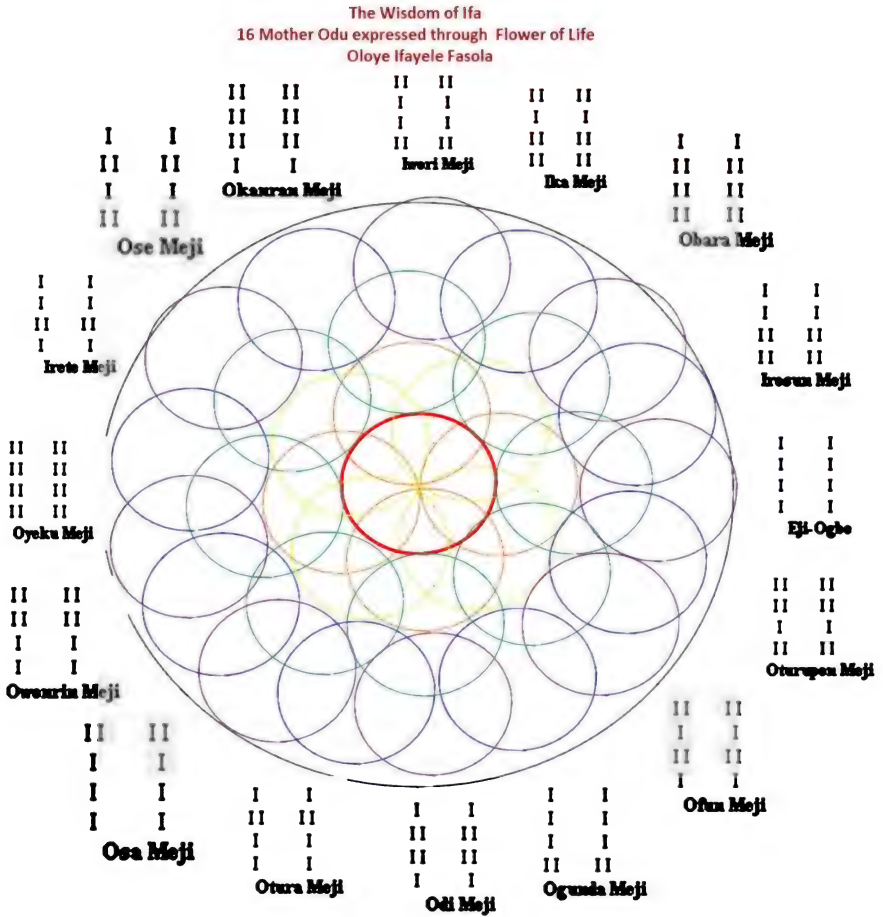
Asaro through Communion with Ori

This meditation practice was shared by the first African American American Bokono (Ifa Priest of Benin) Medahochi Kofi Omowale Zannu Sangodele Mogbarimu Ajinaku El in his private notes, Introduction to Ifa. His work was never published but its contents offer great value. This is a practice designed to align you with your Ori. It involves sitting on the Eni (mat) and utilizing a white cotton sheet and an Ifa Mandala or visual tool to tune tap in. While the meditation was originally for initiated Awos, this form is designed for non initiates to practice.

The initiate begins on their eni (mat) and a white towel or light cotton cloth such as muslin. You will also need a bowl of water and some efun or cascarilla. At the head of the mat will be an Ifa diagram or mandala for meditation and contemplation. Samples can be found on the following pages or online where all 16 odu Ifa

signatures are written. Ideally you will glue this diagram on a small board or laminate it so that you can use it repeatedly.





You begin by kneeling and or do bale on the mat in supplication. Place your head to the ground and say the following chant:

Ibase Onile Mojuba

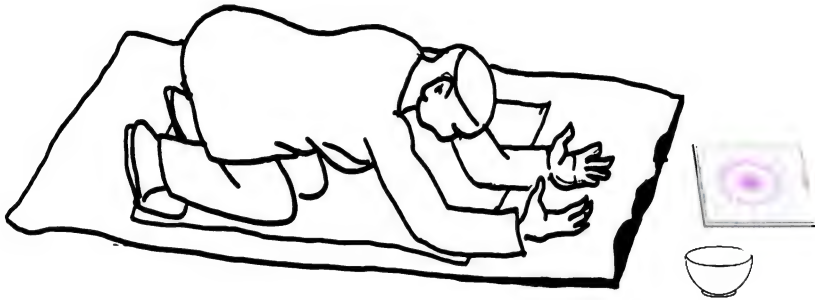
I honor you owner of the Earth (Mother Earth) Thank you

Ela Ro Wa , Ela Ro Wa , Ela Ro Wa ooo

Light descend, Light descend, Light Descend please

Ori Mo Pe O, Ori Mo Pe O

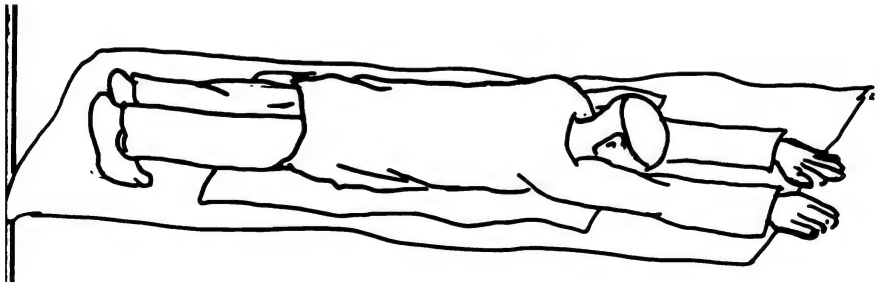
Divine self come, Divine Self come.

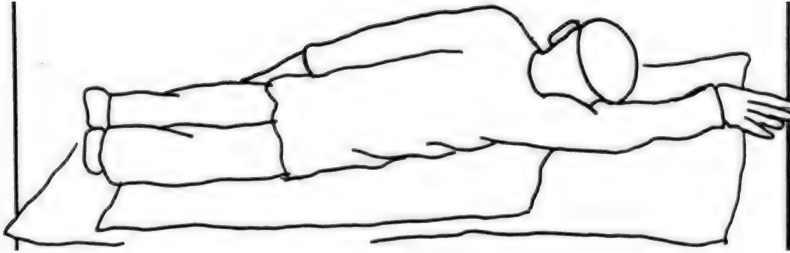


Next position lay flat with arms outstretched. Say

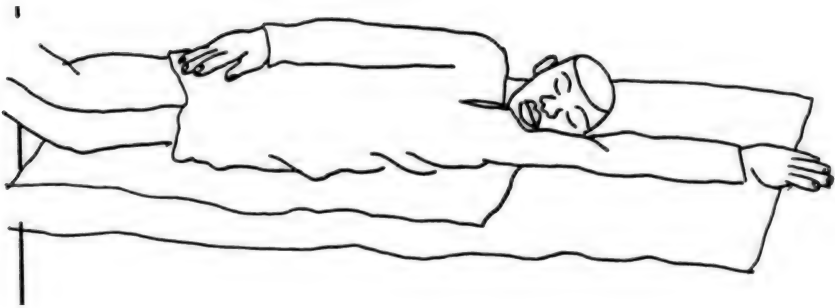
Ori Mojuba , Ori Mojuba, Ori Mojuba

Divine self thank you (3x)

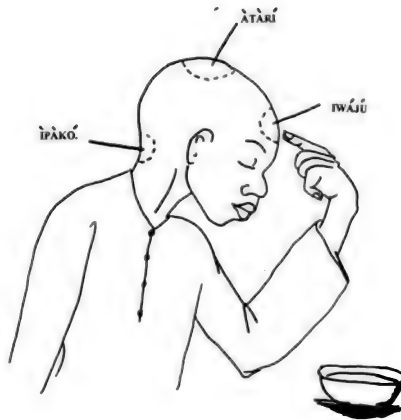




Roll to the right and say



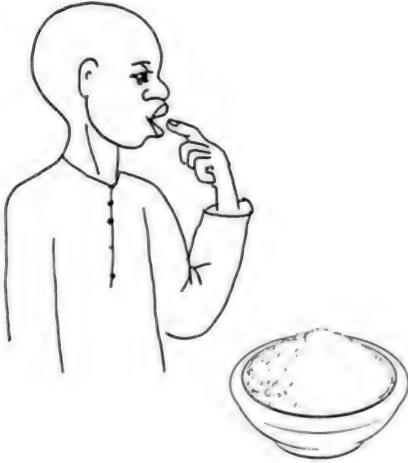
Roll to the left and say:



Sit up and dip left fingers into the bowl of water and sprinkle

on the Iwaju, Atari, and Ipaku. Say Omi tutu, Ori Tutu (Cool Water, Cool Divine Self)

Sprinkle some Efun and water on the tongue

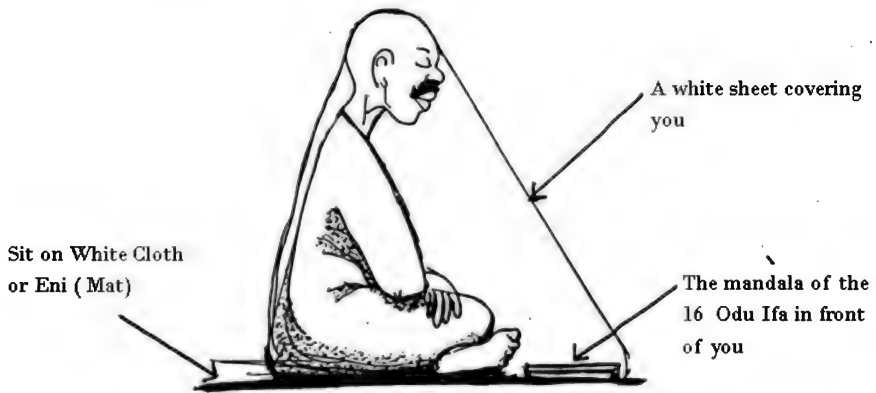


Next trace a line from the forehead to the back of the head with the moistened efun.



Next, take the sheet and place it on top of your head and under your

Ifa diagram and feet as you sit in a cross leg position. This creates a safe womb like environment.



You can begin with staring at the diagram as a focus piece or deep breathing as previously discussed. As you relax you can close your eyes and sink into quiet space.

If the position is uncomfortable for you or you are not able to get on to the floor, then feel free to modify this with a chair or discard the sheet over the head as needed. The point is to create a discipline or regular practice.

Supplementary meditation enhancements

Candles

Supplementary tools that can be used to enhance the experience are candles, gemstones , aromatherapy. Some may balk at these items assuming them to be new age concepts but they are actually very ancient. They were reclaimed in the new age but not created . There is nothing new under the sun. We must always remember that Orisa

and this way of life is tied more to nature than man's rules..or limitations. Fire is called *ina* and by extension light. *Imole*, the primordials , are considered light beings and expressed through a spectrum of color. The precursor to the modern walk candle was an oil lamp often made of clay with oil and a cotton wick. This is still used in traditional *Ifa*. Adding herbal powders enhances effectiveness. It is for this reason , I support the use of candles if one is so inclined. Beeswax candles can be especially effective in ancestral work.



Clay oil lamp was a precursor to candles

Gemstones and Ota

Gemstones are an extension of *Ota* which are sacred icons used in shrines. They are born of the Earth and of water each with specific purposes. There is an *Ifa* chant that speaks of immortality as stones in the water. It is *Oyigiyigi Ota omi Ooo*. The idea being that only two things have been here since the beginning... Stone ...by virtue of the Earth being a big rock and water... being the Earth is covered

in water. A stone will be here long after we are gone. A gemstone is simply a refined stone that has gone through an additional process of crystallization through the pressure from the Earth. The Olokun priesthood's began refining these methods to create beads in ancient times. The original Segi beads and such were of carnelian, lapis, and coral. As they became more rare, a sacred process involving burying stones for a period then digging them up at a later date created a crystallization that produced the shine and illuminating glow of gemstones. This crystallization can enhance Ase when holding it in meditation.

Aromatherapy and Flower Essences

Aromatherapy is the use of essential oils for therapeutic purposes. These oils come from flowers and are just as a part of nature as any form of Ewe (plants). Essential oils carry the Ase of the plant itself. Part of the process of preparing Omi ero (sacred water) and spiritual baths for spiritual work is extracting the essential essences from the plant and placing them in the water. So aromatherapy is a new term for an ancient science in Ifa. There is proof of the use of essential oils used even in the temples of Ancient Egypt. The use of scent is also a very powerful method of enhancing alternate brain wave States. If you use a particular scent for only a specific thing, your brain will begin to associate the scent and that thing. This can be helpful with working with Orisa and specific scents associated with known flowers or Ewe of that Orisa. By meditating on a specific Orisa, and using an oil or flower while meditating can serve as a bridge to connect. Thousands of Diaspora Orisa devotees will attest to the use of Florida water as a means to effect certain work. While I do not care for the commercialized forms of Florida water because they have no therapeutic properties in it at all, (alcohol, water, artificial fragrance, coloring) , the draw is the biological association

of the scent to ritual and ceremony. The ancestors in the diaspora were innovative in that they knew how to “make do” with what they had and work with what was available. They often added their own essences such as cinnamon, oranges, cloves, flowers and other substances to the plain Florida water to increase Ase and potency. Now however, I find homemade versions of Florida water is much better for sacred work. In the sacred work chapter of the book, you can find a recipe for “Florida” water using traditional ingredients that you can make yourself.

Iwure-Prayer

Prayer is *talking* to Spirit. This is essential to know because Meditation is *listening*. Both are complementary but one must be sure to sit and listen....after one has prayed. Imagine someone coming to you for advice and stating their problem and asking for your support and help, but never giving you an opportunity to respond. They just get up and walk away. They would have missed the entirety of what was possible in the situation by ignoring what you had to say in return.

One thing that is important to note about Iwure is that it is an affirmative kind of prayer especially when for someone else. That means it is spoken in the positive and as a declaration . When an elder is offering a blessing or prayer for someone, they are affirming all good things in a way that is a command. This is Ase.. the command of power. They may say something like... All will be well with you. You will have good health. You will have money and success. Your path will be clear. You will have peace of mind. These are affirmations. In fact to say things as other than than that is considered a curse...especially if a priest. When a person receives a Divination from a priest, even if that priest notes some challenges

ahead, they must not say that they will have challenges. They are supposed to say Orisa says you will overcome all challenges. Then they proceed to tell them how to overcome those challenges. This way they are affirming victory and not declaring a curse.

Visualizations -

The iwaju is the 3rd Eye in Ifa Anatomy. It is comprised of the word Iwa meaning character and oju meaning eye. The iwaju is identified as a point on the Ori and connected with the ability to be clairvoyant and seeing the future. Through this faculty, we are able to see visions and dreams. This area is important because the visions that we see are coming from Orun in the invisible world. Before anything comes to manifest on Earth, it has to first come through the spiritual world so it can be seen there first. This is also how some messages from the spiritual world are received. The Ori communicates in symbols, not in words so symbols play a very important part in relaying spiritual ideas. The entire Ifa literary corpus is comprised of symbolic binary letters or language that communicates an immense amount of information with one letter. The ancestral Mothers of Yorubaland created another symbolic language that they applied to fabric called adire. So understanding the language of symbols helps us to “communicate” ie receive but also send messages to and from Orun and Aye.

While the ability to receive a vision is clairvoyant, the ability to send or create one is called visualization. Visualization creates a mental picture that expresses a point and in most cases expresses what we would like to see happen. Visualization can also assist us in deepening our meditation experience by engaging our mind to go on a journey of altered consciousness to enter a trance state as mentioned earlier.

It's important to understand the real impact visualization can have on improving our life conditions. We must note that most of what we operate on in this life are programs. Mental programs that tells us if we should be happy or sad or how we should operate in the world. They can replay traumas that have happened or childhood issues. It is noted that childhood plays an enormous role in how we see and view the world. It should come as no surprise that children spend 80% of their day in an alpha state of daydreaming and it is this state that we program our consciousness. The brain doesn't have a concept of time or space so whatever program goes in stays in until the program changes.

Visualization can help to change the program by creating a new vision for the mind. This new vision gives us the ability to consciously influence and determine how we will experience and show up in the world. We are able to tap the world of Orun and create positive vision experiences that become catalyst for change and the ability to manifest things in Aye. Essentially, in addition to helping us to receive messages, it can help send messages by reprogramming our consciousness. This a powerful healing method for emotional healing and improving our overall quality of life. Because anything that comes to this world has to first go through the spiritual, conscious visualization helps us to create the world we want to live in and what is possible. This is the essence of magic here. Imagination...and it is no mistake that imagination has the word Magi in it. While Magi is not an Ifa Orisa word, the concept of harnessing spiritual power to impact our world is very much a part of the Ifa Orisa Tradition.

The method for visualization I will discuss here is one that involves creating a scenario by using your imagination...just as you did as a

child.

Tap forehead and crown with water and begin to visualize a special place for you. It can be real or imagined. The key is for it to be a place that you feel safe and happy, supported and comfortable. As you indulge in this place allow yourself to take note of what else comes into that vision. What is there...who is there... what is going on? What colors do you see? Smells? Try not to think here...Rather, allow yourself to really daydream and experience ...enjoy. Doing this kind of meditation is a freestyle form of visualization that allows you to tap your creative power again. It allows you to create a inner space but also gives opening for the unexpected to happen such as a message, a meeting , or inspiration. This method will be enhanced with other exercises in other chapters. For now practice being a kid again... imagining

Iroko Tree Ori Meditation

The Iroko tree is one of the most revered trees in Africa. It is referred to as a tree of life and noted for a powerful being that inhabits the tree. The tree is often very tall with branches extending far into the heavens and roots extending down into the earth. It is ancient, and very wise. The Iroko tree is said to speak and inhabit the Egungun inside. This next meditation is based on an ancient practice that draws on the elements, the ancestors, and Ori. It is designed to bring balance and protection through balancing the elements within as well as invoking the primordials of nature.

This practice can be done prior to meditation or in general as a stand alone practice.

1. Stand up straight but not stiff or uncomfortable. Be in a natural posture without slouching or being too rigid. Begin deep breaths allowing for air to come in through the nose and out through the

mouth.

2. Visualize that you are a tree tall and majestic. At the top extending beyond your head where the foliage of the tree would be is a brilliant iridescent great white light hovering above you. Feel it pulsating over your head as if it is a power generator. Take deep breaths in and as you exhale, imagine the light getting brighter and brighter.

3. When you are able to visualize the glow above your head, see it as source energy from your Ori. Then extend your hand up and you're your fingers in a circle above your head 3 times. This is a gesture to ward away negativity or misfortune.

4. Next extend your hands upward as if you are reaching for the sky and creating a channel for this light to flow through and into the top of your head. Say **Iba Ori Isese! Iba Ori Apere! Iba Ori Eleda , ASE ooo!**

5. Then draw down this light from the top and project it through your body, lighting up your body as you go down to your feet. Your hands should have come together in a prayerful position stopping first at the top of your head and say

Atari !

6. Then your forehead and say: **Iwaju**

7. Then the throat saying : **Ofun**

8 Then to the back of the neck and say **Ipako** then at the heart level. and falling to the sides.

9. When the hands are at the heart level, take a deep breath and release then say : **Okan!** See your chest area flooded with light as you breath in and release an tension in the shoulders or otherwise as you exhale.

10. Then place your hands and visualize the light flooding your Belly and say :**Ori Inu!**

11. Then the navel area and say: **Idodo!**

12. Visualize the light extending down your legs and through the roots into the ground and extending into the earth then say”**Ese**”

13. Finally say : **Iponri** when the light gets to the toes.

14. Next face the East if you are not already and say

Ìbà'se ilà Oòrùn. Iba Afefe

I respect the power of the East. I honor Air

Next to the West and say

Ìbà'se iwò Oòrun, Iba Aye

I respect the powers of the West. I honor the Earth

Next to the north and say

Ìbà'se Aríwá. Iba Ina

I respect the powers of the North. I honor Fire.

Then to the south and say

Ìbà'se Gúúsù. Iba Omi ooo

I respect the power of the South. I honor water

15. Finish by visualizing a tree branch extending to your right hand with that hand raised at the right shoulder. Then take the right hand and cross it over to the left shoulder. Say: Okunrin to represent the masculine channel of energy in the body.

16. Visualize a branch extending to your left hand with that hand raised at the left shoulder. Then take the left hand and cross it over the right reaching for the left shoulder. Say: Obinrin to represent the feminine channel of energy in the body.

The result should be your standing with your hands crossed over each other in a “ Wakanda greeting” pose.

17. Let your hands drop to the sides and breath normally.



Iroko Tree Meditation

Ikin or Ota Meditation-

Only for those with consecrated shrines and have undergone initiation (isefa, Itefa, Idosu, itelodu.)

For those who have consecrated shrines of Ifa , you may enhance your meditations through your Ikin. The Ikin are nature's embodiment of Ifa Agbon or wisdom. It is the fruit from the tree of life itself. Consecrated shrines are shrines that "talk" . They have undergone the ritualized process of awakening the spirit imbibed and it becomes a portal between worlds and a representation of Ela.

Gather 1 , 4, 8, or 16 Ikin. Hold them in your cupped hands. Alternatively hold them in your left hand while covering them with your right hand. Rest them in your lap.

You can mark the Odu received from your Ita on the Opon Ifa if you know how. Then place some on your tongue, forehead and draw it to the back of your head. Ideally you would also chant a verse from you ita as well. If you do not know what I am referring to or don't know how don't worry about it. Do ask your Oluwo when you have a chance how to do this. Just hold the Ikin and sit in stillness.

*Ota from consecrated shrines can also be used as described with Ikin.

References:

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Chapter 8

The Way of Ancestral Centered Living

We don't worship ancestors. We continue our relationship with them in the invisible world

One of the greatest assaults in history on Africans in the diaspora is the severance of their ancestral families and relationships left in Africa their homeland. Throughout over 3000 ethnic groups and kingdoms, one thing that united continental Africans and really all indigenous people worldwide is their relationships with their ancestors. The ancestors is what allows us to understand who we are, where we come from, and where we are going. While many have suggested that ancestral veneration is worshipping the ancestors, I find it's not so much worship so much as it is continuing the relationship after the physical body ceases to exist. There is a recognition of the ancestral world and it's vastness that far exceeds this known world of the living. This is our true home in that it is where we come from and where we return to once we complete our

missions on Earth.

There is a continuity that exists through the cycles of birth, life, death, and rebirth. We are closely connected to our ancestors because we are born in the same circle of life as them and born through the same channels of energy they have created. We must live with the results of their actions when they were living, Inherited mind-sets, predispositions and emotions that influence us and impact the destiny of the family. We often inherit eating habits, biological tendencies and even ancestral memory.

So strong are some of these things that the science of epigenetics has now documented that we inherited cellular memory up to 14 generations back. It is interesting to note how close this is to the Ifa view which views the impact of ancestors 16 generations backward and 16 forward. This includes trauma that is “remembered” and set in the genetic cellular structure. For African Diasporans this is of particular interest because of the level of trauma those ancestors were subjected to under several generations enduring human captivity and forced labor And the constant threat of death all the way up to Jim Crow and modern police brutality towards people of color. This intergenerational trauma plays out psychologically as well. According to Dr. Joy DeGruy Leary in her book, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome, America’s Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing*, PTSS is when a population experiences intergenerational trauma from centuries of psychological and emotional enslavement and continues to face institutionalized oppression and racism. This has resulted in a marked pattern of maladaptive behaviors that were survival strategies. These behavior patterns resulted in patterns such as low self esteem, anger and violence, addictions, chronic depression, self sabotage and so on.

These behaviors are passed down through learned responses from what is witnessed in the family. These patterns undoubtedly impact our quality of life as well as create limitations in maximizing our potential and opportunities in life.

It should be clear now of the impact our ancestors have had on us and how we are significantly influenced by those who came before. This is why ancestor work is necessary , especially for those in the diaspora. It has the ability to transform these traumas and facilitate healing and empowerment for ourselves, our families, and our communities. . It's important to note that just as we are influenced by the 16 generations of ancestors before us, we have the ability to influence those 16 generations of descendants going forward. The work with ancestors are not just for healing the past but to progress future generations.

On a more practical level, ancestral work can support our daily lives as well. Because of their close relationship with us via family, they are likely to be one of our first lines of support and defense for life problems.

Ways Ancestors can Influence our World

- They have the ability to see what we cannot, such as the ill intentions of someone toward us .
- They have the ability to influence outcomes by whispering in another person's ear or showing up in their dreams.
- They have access to our spiritual double (will be discussed in Egbe chapter).
- They can lend us advice from their lifetime experiences.
- They can help us with family issues and crisis.

- They can reverse negative trends and generational curses in the family especially those that may have started with them.
- They can attract new opportunities for good fortune to us.
- They can help us tap unknown family gifts and resources
- They can offer protection from potentially harmful situations.
- They have the ability to heal with healing from biological conditions inherited.
- They have the ability to clear negativity
- They can assist with the translation of loved ones leaving this world and the rites of passage to theirs

How the Ancestral World Influences The World of the Living

The ancestors are recognized as those who are the first line of appeal and support in our world. They are there, still loving and guiding us from the other side just as they did while living here. However, they are not viewed as “holy” or to be worshiped as a supernatural power. Instead, they are to be honored if they have lived an honorable life. They also are recognized as having greater access in ways we cannot have with our human bodies. They can see us but we cannot see them. That ability gives them insight into what others around us may be doing for or against our interest. In this way, they have the insight to warn us when something is amiss. They can see the bigger picture whereas we may only be able to see a very tiny view.

The ancestral world and the world of the living are very connected and separated only by a thin veil to reveal a multi dimensional layer that permeates time and space. This is consistent with quantum physics theory which posits that the universe is multidimensional. The world that we live in is a 3 dimensional or 3D world. It is a

world that we can see and touch . These relate to our physical bodies. The 4th dimension is where we experience feelings, thoughts... These relate to the mind beyond the brain. The 5th dimension and beyond are higher spiritual planes.

Yoruba cosmology also suggests that the ancestral world is considered to be multidimensional having from 9 Oruns or 16 dimensions. These dimensions operate on a vibrational level. Just as fast moving atoms are invisible like gases and slow moving atoms are visible and tangible so is the way to understand the ancestral world Orun and the world of the living Aye. Another way to understand is through the analogy of a fan. When a fan is on high , you cannot see the blades. When the fan is on low, you can see the blades. Just because you cannot see the fan blades, does not mean they do not exist. The first level of the ancestral world is considered a mirror of the world of the living because it is only separated by a thin veil. It is where the two worlds meet that we can interact with the ancestors. It is also here that we can influence one another and interact through the 4th dimension via our thoughts, emotions, dreams, visions, intuitions, etc.

Egungun

Ancestors in the Ifa tradition are called Egun. Egun refers to individual ancestors but literally means bone. Egungun refers to collective or community ancestors. This term expresses a larger or more expansive group. Egungun is also considered an Orisa as referring back to the first ancestor of humanity. Other origin stories vary depending on the community and reflect in Odu Ifa. Many seem to reflect the historical stories of who brought the Egungun celebrations to the particular village. Egun are honored through

communion and community.

Personal shrines of individual Egun can be erected and offerings of food and other items can be made on behalf of the person or for the family. These shrines may consist of any combination of things and tend to be highly personal and may vary greatly according to lineage. Some may have many items pertaining to their ancestors such as pictures, candles, personal effects on an altar. Others may have actual shrines consisting of Igba Egun or ancestral vessels with sacred items. Some may have Opa Egun (a large staff), ukhurhe



(carved wooden rattle staffs), or Igi Egun/ Isan Egun consisting of a collection of consecrated and specially prepared bundled branches from a sacred tree specifically associated with ancestors. The staffs and branches of the ancestors and also associated with Egungun are representative of the umbilical cord that tie one to the first ancestors. They are often twisted or spiral representing the twisted umbilical

cord.

Others may add to it by having special consecrated Masquerade garments added to it. These are called Egungun Paaka. These are worn during family or community events where the Egun are given the opportunity to address the whole through a medium. When worn, the individual is completely veiled in order for them to not be associated with the message but to allow for the ancestral spirit to speak through the veil. The veil represents the veil between worlds and that which is invisible. The masquerades encased with special medicines that activate the power to dispel negative influences in the family and community. This is one of the reasons Egungun festivals are done yearly.

Egungun Masquerade with Igi Egun





Isan Egun

Categories of Ancestors

The Egungun can also be broken down into sub categories as well. There are Egungun for the mothers lineage or Egungun Iya .One of the mothers lineage ancestral traditions are through the Gelede . The ancestral mothers , the Awon Iya wa hold great influence over the ancestral realm because all ancestral festivals were originally theirs. Historically mothers are who carry the baby and no one is born that is not from a woman so mothers have unbroken connections to every person born through their naval, a reminder of their connection to their mother. The word Gelede is derived from the word ge (sooth) eḷe refers to private parts of a woman and de means gentleness. So it reflects the power of women.

Other categories of Egungun include but are not limited to:

Egungun Baba refers to the fathers line.

Egungun Ologun - refers to the ancestral warriors. These are individuals who fought for the liberation of their people or defended their community or family while they were living.

Egungun Ologun- The ancestors who were Healers.

Egungun Aye refers to your living parents. While they are still living, they are sometimes needing to be supported through care if they are sick, elderly, or unable to care for themselves. It is the responsibility of the children to care for the parents. Failure to do so could create problems when the parent transitions to the other side.

Egungun Orisa - refers to the ancestral priests of an Orisa or the original Ancestor that became an Orisa.



Gelede Shrine

Which Ancestors Should We Work With?

Within the practices of ancestral veneration, the determination of who to venerate comes up. In that case there are the Egungun Apebo who are considered the venerable ancestors. These are the ones who are considered to have lived extraordinary lives or lives of achievement and prestige. They have established a legacy through their work. This may be within a community or simply within a family. Parents and grandparents are often included here but other family members, step parents, and even adoptive parents may be

included in this category.

The Egungun Akoti are considered the non venerable ancestors. They may have been corrupted or lived lives that were considered unproductive or harmful to the family or community. Some have suggested that people should only work with the “good” ancestors... They the bad or unenlightened ones should be ignored. In many cases that may be true. Mass murders, pedofiles, human traffickers should not.

There are ,however, many who fall in between. Neither outstanding nor terrible. Normal people who lived normal lives who had human flaws as we all do. I have found that we really aren't adept at judging properly many “bad” behaviors as some are the result of trauma, ancestral trauma, or could have been a victim of circumstances at the time. Work with the ancestors is a reciprocal one in that we are not just asking for what they can do for us. We are also helping them. By helping them, we help ourselves because as they are elevated and healed, they have greater ability to help us and the family. Many ancestors are eager to help right they did wrong in their lifetime. For one, they know they will have to come back through that family line some day and if it is healed, they will have a better life.

Further, there are more practical reasons to work with more ancestors. No one is all bad. An example might be an uncle who was a great car mechanic might have gotten in trouble with the law...maybe had to do some time... He is gone now but you are having car trouble... maybe need a new car and you need support in getting it fixed properly or finding a good road worthy vehicle. The sage from the 3500 BC may not be the best choice to call on to help with that. It is that uncle that is best able to help with that. So good

or bad is relative when determining who and what to work with. Besides the fact that I've found trying to isolate them just doesn't work... It's like the family reunion when you say... I only want the good relatives to come... Cousin Pokey who always cheat at the game of spades and drink everyone's liquor is still coming...and we still have to deal with her.

There are also ancestors who are not settled on the other side. These are ancestors who may have died a tragic or violent death. They may be "trapped" or bound more closely to the visible plane. Some may not have even realized that they have transitioned , especially if it was unexpected. We may see them as disturbed in dreams or apparitions of their human bodies slightly still visible. In those cases, we may need to assist them or help elevate them so that they may become settled. This becomes the work of priests in assisting with such nuances.

Establishing a Consecrated Ancestral Shrine or Altar

One of the primary ways we begin the process of ancestral work is through the establishment of an ancestral altar or shrine. These act as portals through which we interact with our ancestors. A shrine is a formally consecrated vessel with traditionally consecrated tools that have been prepared by a priest. Traditionally, the shrine is on the floor. This is because, in Africa, people are generally buried under the house or inside the home. These altars might feature a corner through which a semicircle is drawn around with chalk on both the floor and the walls. 9 lines extend from the circle to give the appearance of a sun with rays. 9 is the number of the ancestors as there are considered 9 Realms of Orun. This is not standard. It may be as the person is led by their ancestors and available space.

Floor altars are not great for people with pets. Within the circle may be an Egun Igba or Ancestral vessel, Opa Egun, And or Igi Egun mentioned earlier along with a plate of food and water.



Ancestral Altar in Corner with Mat.

An altar may or may not be consecrated by a priest but an established place or space of veneration determined by each person. It can be large as a whole room and as small as a shelf or space in a closet. Altars found in the diaspora may have variety of different items. Diaspora people did not all come from one area and certainly not all came from Yorubaland. . They were often from across the continent. This brought a number of different ways to establish altars. The following include items that may be found on diaspora ancestral altars.

- White cloth underneath representing the fabric of existence.
- An Ancestral quilt. Quilts were used in the Underground railroad to give direction. The African American Ancestral mothers often sewed stories into them to pass on to the next generation.
- White candles representing light and giving them light in the darkness. [Fire]
- Flowers or a plant to pour libation in. [Earth]
- Water (sometimes 9 glasses) to offer them. (Nine is the number for the ancestral world as it is considered to have 9 dimensions). Represents refreshment, cooling, and healing
- Incense to bring a sweet aroma , tobacco, or Cigar for them to enjoy and support communication[Air]
- Some May include Impepho, (Helichrysum petiolare or licorice-plant) A dried plant used and burned in Sub Saharan Africa to open up and deepen communication with the ancestors and ward of malicious spirits. In hoodoo, it is called Life Everlasting
- Pictures of deceased loved ones
- Food

- Wood carvings of an elder man and woman to represent the male or father's ancestral line and female or mother ancestral line.
- A bell to call them
- A collection of dirt from their graves.
- Ancestor stick Unconsecrated staff used to call them
- A family tree listing the ancestors they are aware of.
- Money: To pay the toll and or ancestral debts between worlds (Practice derived from Asian ancestral practices, not traditional Africa but now used by some Diasporans)

Many will have more items that are special to the family but it is best to leave it as simple as possible and allow the Egun to express what they desire. You will find how to know that in the chapter covering Obi Oracle.

When establishing an altar, it is important to select a place that is comfortable for you. Where ever you decide, the area and altar must be cleansed first. Cleansing can begin with a general cleaning regimen of soap, water, bleach, etc. It can then be enhanced by cleaning spiritually with items such as smudging with white sage , a bundle used in Native American traditions. Some people in the diaspora find including this supports the recognition of Native American ancestors whose land the Africans found themselves on. It also represent those Native American ancestors who may be blood relatives through the interaction of Africans and Native Americans through the years. Other means of cleansing and refreshing is through the use of "Florida Water" or with prepared omi ero. Once the area is cleansed you may begin placing the items on the altar.

African Diaspora Offering Ceremony

Because feeding is important to the Ancestors, you should bring a

prepared meal to place on the shrine. It's helpful to bring things they ate and enjoyed to present to them. Because ancestors can go back to ancient times this may vary greatly. I've found that things like rice and fish or chicken are pretty much eaten by a large number of people even if preparation may vary. Sweet Desserts , fruit, coffee , and liquor are also universal favorites. Taking a portion of a family meal can be an option. So it doesn't have to be specially prepared unless you desire that. Some African American diaspora offering favorites is might be some of the following :

Collard greens

Cornbread

Candied Yams

Macaroni and Cheese

Baked Chicken and Dressing

Oxtails

Gumbo

Fish and grits

Beans and Rice

Coffee or tea

Jambalaya

Bacon or Ribs

Boiled eggs

Or other items generally identified as "soul food" in the African American ethnic group.

One thing that is important to point out is that you should never project your diet on to your ancestors. That is to say, if you are a vegetarian, that's good for you. But if your ancestors were not, don't offer them vegetarian food outside of normal vegetables they would eat anyway. For instance corn on the cob , beans and rice may be ok. Vegan Mac and cheese... no matter how good you feel it might be...is not likely to impress your grandmother who was from

Mississippi! It would go over the same way it is likely to go over at the family reunion! Remember, the point is to draw them near...not push them away! Imagine if you are a vegan and your descendants offering you pork ribs! Respect goes both ways.

Calling Them In

Once you have your altar /shrine established, it's time to invite them in. Its a celebration and reunion so it's nice to open with a song or two. Sing Egun songs or Songs typical to your ancestral journey. For African Americans this may be songs deemed "Old Negro Spirituals" or community songs. It may even be the African American or Negro National Anthem "Lift Every Voice and sing till Earth and Heaven ring" by James and John Johnson. Modern songs that honor the ancestors are also acceptable and there are African songs that have been adapted in the diaspora that are popularly used. An internet search of Egun or Egungun songs may yield a variety of options.

Once you have sung a song or two, you may begin your Mojuba and offer libation of water, rum, or gin. It can be poured on the ground, in a plant if water, by a tree, in a separate bowl or elsewhere. Then offer thanks with a Mojuba. The one found below may be used or modified as needed . It may be spoken in Yoruba or English or both.

Omi Tutu (Cool water)

Ona Tutu (Freshen my road)

Ile Tutu (Freshen my house)

Ori Tutu (Freshen my head)

Tutu Esu (Refresh Esu)

Tutu Orisa (Refresh the Orisas)

Tutu Egun Mi (Freshen my Ancestors)

Tutu Gbogbo Ara Orun (Freshen all the citizens of heaven))

Mojuba Oludumare (I Praise the Almighty)

Mojuba Olorun (I Praise the Spirit of light of the Sun.)
Mojuba Ibae Egun Gbogbo Egun Ibae (I praise the Ancestors)
Mojuba Gbogbo Orisa (I Praise All The Orisha)
Mojuba Baba Alagba Osin Ati Olosin Egbe Egungun Mi (I Praise
Father Alagba, Chief Ancestor.
Mojuba Iya Tobi Mi (I Praise the Mother who birthed me)
Mojuba Baba Tobi Mi (I Praise the Father who bore me)
Mojuba Iyalorisa (I praise the mother of Orisa)
Mojuba Babalorisha (I praise the father of Orisha)
Ki Nkan Ma Se (Godmother's name) (I Praise my God Mother)
Ki Nkan Ma Se (Godfather's name) (I praise my God Father)
Kosi Ko Iku Ojoji (Never let me die a sudden death)
Kosi Ano (Don't Let Sickness Take Me)
Kosi Arun (Protect me from sickness)
Kosi Ina (Don't let passion fixate me, or let me experience fights)
Kosi Eyo (Don't let obstacles get in my path)
Kosi Fitibo (Don't let me be overwhelmed)
Kosi Ofo (Don't let me experience loss)
Kosi Ese (Don't let me succumb to evil)
Kosi Fun Mi Ni Alafia (Give to me peace and prosperity)
Fun Mi Ni Owo (Give to me money)
Fun Mi Ni Ola (Give to me honor)
Fun Mi Ni Isegun (Give to me victory)
Fun Mi Ni Imo (Give to me knowledge)
Fun Mi Ni Ogbon (Give to me wisdom)
Fun Mi Ni Onje (Give to me food)
Fun Mi Ni Iwa (Give to me good character)
Fun Mi Ni Suuru (Give to me patience)
Fun Mi Ni Agbara (Give to me strength)
Fun Mi Ni Aso (Give to me cloth – clothing)
Fun Mi Ni Omo (Give to me children – biological, spiritual and/or
creative)

Fun Mi Ni ILE Odara (Give to me a good home)

Iba Se....(now call the names of the known ancestors and include mention of the unknown ones. Follow each name with Ase.

At this point, you may offer your food items and explain to them why you are calling them and what you wish to discuss or pray about.

Imphepho

Imphepho is a traditional Zulu herb that is used to call in ancestors for consultation. It is called Life Everlasting in African American Hoodoo and found in the Gullah Islands and Low Country in the United States. Imphepho is burned to induce a state of calm and trance to tune into the ancestral world. Different traditions may vary on the use of smoke for spiritual work. Some traditions use it regularly while others may forbid it. Its use will depend on the person and their ancestors wishes. I include it here because it may be included for African Americans with a special leaning towards African American Hoodoo.

Continental African Offering

If you have a formal consecrated Egungun shrine, vessel, Opa/Igi Egun, masquerade Egungun cloth , they will be fed according to the lineage and direction of the priest that prepared them. The details for it will not be presented here as it can vary.

Some items typically used veneration in the continental Yoruba Tradition are:

Akara(bean cakes)

Moinmoin (Maize and beans meal)

cooked food
kola nut with four lobes
Alligator pepper
Yam
cock
Goat
Bowl Of Water

The offerings can be made one by one directly on the grave of an ancestor , before the Egun vessel and/ or on the large toe of the person if the grave is unknown or inaccessible. The right large toe represents the male ancestors while the large left toe represents the female ancestors.

To begin, a relevant Ifa verse Ogunda Owonrin may be recited

The ocean is filled to the brim
The lagoon is filled to capacity
Alasan is going to Asan
Alasan is going to Asan, the Awo of the top of the rock
(a reference to going to the top of the mountain to pray to the ancestors)
The elders thought the matter over
And realized that it was no longer favorable
They used their mustaches to cover their faces
And spread their beards firmly over their chest
(Reference ps a need to return to the ways of the ancient ones)
These were the declarations of Ifa to Isese (Traditionalism)
What is one's Isese??
Olodumare is one's Isese
It is Isese we ought to appease
Before appeasing any Orisa
One's Mother is one's Isese

Before appeasing any Orisa

It is Isese we ought to appease

One's Father is one's Isese

It is Isese we ought to appease

Before appeasing any Orisa

The male genital organ is one's Isese (Genitals are through which we came)

It is Isese we ought to appease

Before appeasing any Orisa

The female genital organs one's Isese (We All came through a womb)

It is Isese we ought to appease

Before appeasing any Orisa

Please let us appease Isese

Isese if the father of all Etutu

The Isese of your mother's lineage

The Isese of your father's lineage

May they all give approval to this Ebo

Before we appease any Orisa

Ase

Another may be if using an ancestral cloth

Egungun mo pe

Ara Orun kin in kin

Abala

Arago gbale

Oni bebe aso

Tigbale se

Tigboro se

Ara re a jopo aso

Egungun to tigboro se

Ara re a jopo omolangaran
Egungun ti o laso ki rode
Egungun alaso ni egungun ti wa

Translation

Ancestors I invoke you
The inhabitants of heaven
Abala
You that have clothes to sweep the floor
The owner of many valuable clothes
You emerge from the grove
You emerge from the forest
The Egungun that comes out the grove
His costume is full of many valuable clothes
The Egungun that comes out of the forest
His dress will be full of blur
The Egungun that doesn't have sufficient clothes should not go on
outing
My own Egungun is rich with valuable clothing

To call mother lines

In Eji Ogbe, Ifa says:

Osan ni o san pe
Oru ni o ru pe
Oru ni o kan baba m'ese pin-pin-pin
Dia fun Yeye eni
Yeye eni nt'orun bo wa'le aye
Yoo waa gbe'ni nigbayi o
Iye eni kii gbe'nii ti ...

Translation

The day cannot last for too long
And the night cannot last for too long
The night cannot stick additional hoof on the leg of a horse
Ifa's message for one's Mother
When coming from heaven to Earth
She will come and give one support this time around
One's Mother cannot fail to give one her support...

Òsá-Ìrètẹ̀)
Àgbàrá kò lókó
Ó fi ẹnu gbélẹ̀ ó kan ilẹpa dòdòdòdò
Díá fún Ìṣẹ̀ṣe tí nṣe olórí Ìṣòrò n'Ífẹ̀
Ìyá ẹni Ìṣẹ̀ṣe ẹni ni
Bàbá ẹni Ìṣẹ̀ṣe ẹni ni
Orí, Ìṣẹ̀ṣe ẹni ni...
Olódùmarè, Ìṣẹ̀ṣe ẹni ni
Ìṣẹ̀ṣe làá bọ n'Ífẹ̀ ká tóó ri'ire
E jé ká bọ Ìṣẹ̀ṣe bàbá ètùtù

Translation

The flood has no hoe
It uses its mouth to dig the ground until it reaches the red soil
This was the Ifa cast for Isese, Traditionalism
Who was the highest form of Worship
One's mother is one's Ìṣẹ̀ṣe (the source)
One's father is one's Ìṣẹ̀ṣe
One's Ori is one's Ìṣẹ̀ṣe
Olódùmarè is one's Ìṣẹ̀ṣe
Isese is propitiated first in Ife before receiving all blessings
Let us propitiate Isese, the father of all propitiations

Next is a Ijuba and a call on the names of the ancestors desired and a presentation of the items of food for them.

After that, speak to them and say whatever your prayers are to them.

The next chapter will discuss Obi Divination which is a method to deepen relationship with them.

Practical Ways to Incorporate Ancestral Living

Practical ways to incorporate ancestral living based on researching DNA and determining the ethnic groups that your ancestry is tied to. Then by looking at the regions that are in your DNA by incorporating the arts and practices in your ancestral work and shrine. Things like gardening, sculpting, dancing, drumming, meditations, cooking, singing, fishing , hairstyling/ braiding, and chanting.

Even things like cooking, when you could passing down recipes, ingredients, cook away trauma, placing medicine in the food... these are traditions that are passed down. Fishing, throwing a rope like our ancestors...Braiding brings together the collective message of that ancestral spirit. From working on a puzzle to working on a car to sipping tea on the porch... these are the ways of our ancestors. Antiques and things of the past allow a connection to the ancestors. Not just going to shrine. Need to build a conscious presence that they are with you. The smell of the flowers of your grandmother's perfume reminds you of who she was.

Tracing Ancestry through the Family Tree

Compiling your family tree can be a rewarding and worthwhile task that helps you to connect with your ancestors as well as the living. This also helps in documentation of your ancestors as you call them by name. Your tree may be collected in an official book, photo album, or scrapbook, or keepsake book. Most of the time it will start with just collecting documents in a file. There are many tools online that will allow you to start your family tree online for free. These accounts can help you to connect to other family members who may contribute online . A family social media group can help with the sharing of stories and information as well as connect relatives. Family Reunions and unfortunately, Funerals are a goldmine of family history and stories. The elders of the family are generally in a position to share and talk with one another about old times and what their parents and grandparents told them.

To start your formal tree, you will use a Pedigree Chart or Ancestor Chart. A Pedigree chart begins with one person and then has branches that extend to parent, grandparents, great grandparents. Some can extend out up to 8 generations. This allow you to document the mothers and father lines of the person. It does not include siblings or cousins in this chart. A family chart might siblings under this kind of chart while reducing the number of generations. An Individual Ancestor chart will include details about a particular ancestor. Their accomplishments, dates of birth, military service, marriage or unions, land ownership or residences, and any distinguished activities from their lives.

A family group record will record a union and the descendants of

that union or family. It will help organize your information further. It helps to bridge other information on other family trees of cousins and other relatives. An Individual Data Record helps to record information on an individual and the events of their lives. You can record stories and known accomplishments there.

Creating a family tree is often a long term project. It took the author of this book 20 years to find 8 generations of one family line. Because of the nuances with slavery and the poor documentation of personal information of slaves, it can be a task especially beyond 1865 when slaves were emancipated in the United States. The census records are very helpful for the generations after that starting with the 1870 records. What you would need to do is start with the most current census records that are available and find the relatives you know. Then you can work your way back tracing them as children in earlier records cross matching date of birth, race, place of birth, region, siblings. Nick names may have been used or names may be misspelled so their may be some digging for this. Ancestry.com and other sites have full databases you can research by name and special criteria these things and save census records with people under your tree. Military records, marriage records, newspaper records may all be helpful. African American grave yards may also be a source of information.

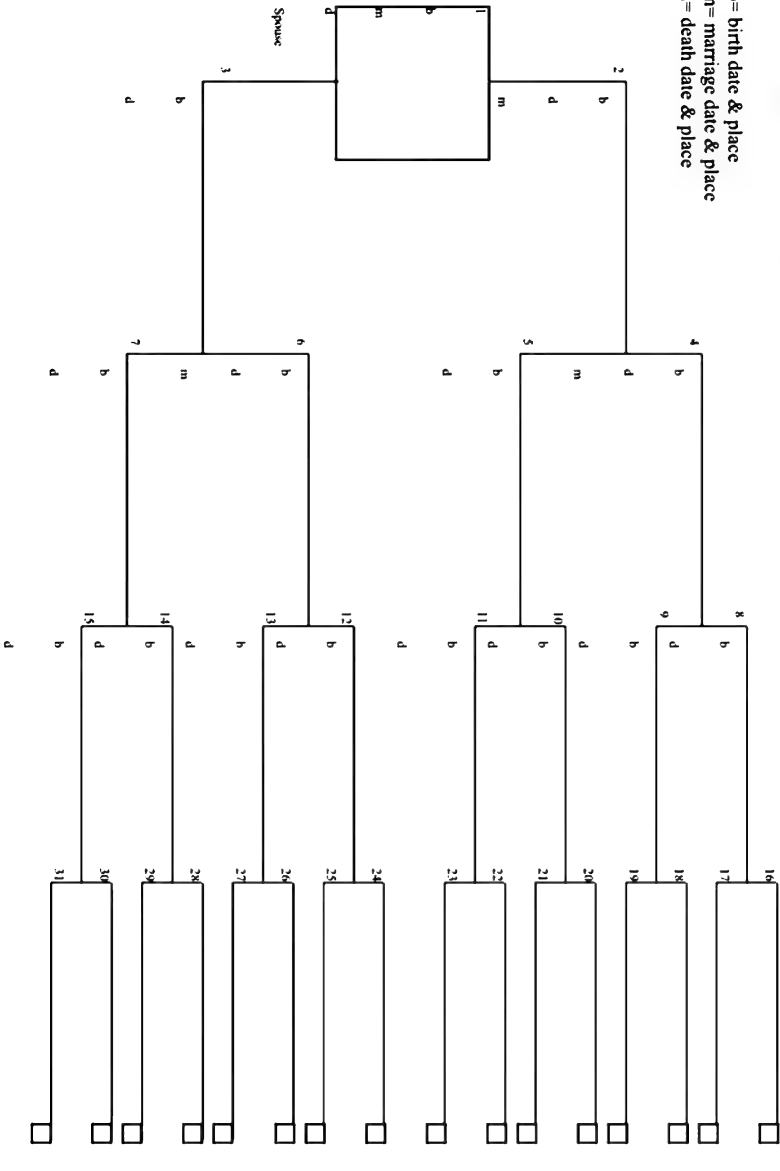
Once you get to before 1865, and your ancestors were in the American south, you are likely to have to look at the slave schedules or tax records that documented them only by gender and age. This is where whoever is in the 1870 or 1880 schedule has a date of birth prior to 1865 might be found in the same area or county under the schedule. It's not foolproof however. Many slaves changed their last names so you may or may not find it under the last name. It's also important to look at the place of birth documented on the census

record as they may have moved before or after emancipation. Sometimes civil war records can have documentation for African Americans as they recruited and documented the names and information of the soldiers. Pension records may also have relevant information. The Freedmans bureau was one of the greatest documentation efforts just after they gained freedom. They documented marriages, children, siblings and such in an effort to reconnect lost relatives and support the new population of freed people.

Sample Pedigree or Ancestor chart

Five-Generation Ancestor Chart
 # 1 on this chart is the same as
 # _____ on chart # _____

b = birth date & place
 m = marriage date & place
 d = death date & place



Compiled by:

Family Group Record

Prepared By _____ Relationship to Preparer _____ Date _____ Ancestral Chart # _____ Family Unit # _____
 Address _____

Husband		Date— Day Month Year		Occupation(s)	City	County	State or Country	Religion	
Born									
Christened								Name of Church	
Married								Name of Church	
Died								Cause of Death	
Buried								Date Will Written/Proved	
Father									
Mother									
Wife maiden name				Occupation(s)				Religion	
Born									
Christened								Name of Church	
Died								Cause of Death	
Buried								Date Will Written/Proved	
Father				Other-Husbands					
Mother									
Sex	Children Given Names	Birth Day Month Year	City	Birthplace County	St./City	Date of first marriage/Place Name of Spouse	City	Date of Death/Cause State/Country	Computer ID #
M/F									
1									
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									
7									
8									
9									
10									
11									
12									

Individual Record

DATA WORK SHEET (For recording genealogical information as it is gathered from various sources.)

Date	Search No.	Enclosure No.	Name of Subject						
Printed Record			Subject's Data	Day	Month	Year	City, Town or Place	County or Province, etc.	State or Country
Vol. Page Location			Birth						
Document Dated			Recorded	Chr'nd					
Who controls or has record?			Mar.						
<input type="checkbox"/> Bible			Death						
<input type="checkbox"/> Census			Burial						
<input type="checkbox"/> Church			Places of Residence						
<input type="checkbox"/> Correspondence			Occupation	Church Affiliation	Military Rec.				
<input type="checkbox"/> Court			Father	Mother					
<input type="checkbox"/> Deed			Name of Spouse						
<input type="checkbox"/> History			Spouse's Data	Day	Month	Year	City, Town or Place	County or Province, etc.	State or Country
<input type="checkbox"/> Home			Birth						
<input type="checkbox"/> Interview			Chr'nd						
<input type="checkbox"/> Military			Death						
<input type="checkbox"/> Obituary			Burial						
<input type="checkbox"/> Tombstone			Places of Residence						
<input type="checkbox"/> (Vital) Record			Occupation	Church Affiliation	Military Rec.				
<input type="checkbox"/> Other			Father	Mother					
<input type="checkbox"/> Original: <input type="checkbox"/> Certified Copy: <input type="checkbox"/> Recorded Copy:			Copy verbatim on this form the information you find in the various records or books as you do your research. (You will find differences in records.) Make a separate sheet for each search or each name or family on your line found in a search. Then, after information has been extracted from all sources, you may easily make comparisons of statements, judge value of each, and record correct data on permanent form such as A1, F1, P3 or P6. See THE SIXTH EDITION THE HOW BOOK FOR GENEALOGISTS for additional suggestions regarding the use of this sheet.						
<input type="checkbox"/> Transcribed Copy: <input type="checkbox"/> Extract:									
<input type="checkbox"/> Photo Copy: <input type="checkbox"/> Handwritten: <input type="checkbox"/> Typewritten: <input type="checkbox"/> Printed:									

Legibility									
Sex	Children's names in full (As given in order of birth)	Birth or Death	Day	Month	Year	City, Town or Place	County or Province, etc.	State or Country	Add. info. on children
1	Full name of spouse*	Birth							
		Mar.							
		Death							
		Burial							
2	Full name of spouse*	Birth							
		Mar.							
		Death							
		Burial							
3	Full name of spouse*	Birth							
		Mar.							
		Death							
		Burial							
4	Full name of spouse*	Birth							
		Mar.							
		Death							
		Burial							

*If married more than once list each mar. (1) (2) etc. and list in "Add. info. on children" column. Use space below or reverse side for additional children, other notes, references or information.

Tracing Ancestry through DNA

As of the time of this writing, the science of Discovering Ancestry through DNA has taken great strides. Several companies have begun to offer insights we never thought possible in tracing bloodlines through DNA. Because of the broken lineages of Diasporans, this becomes a valuable tool especially when combined with direct research on the family tree. They are even beginning to be able to connect with DNA relatives both in the United States and the African continent. Utilizing these tools can bring unexpected healing and closure to some aspects of our Ancestral Journey. The DNA is extracted from your saliva and submitted to a lab. The lab will then extract your genome and specific genetic markers to help them isolate your ancestral DNA. These markers are compared to a population sample at key regions where they know they have been for several generations. The number of population samples along with the quality of the personal history information derived from those who submitted population samples determine how close they can match people.

For instance if the company only has 200 samples of Africans and there are 54 Countries and over 3000 ethnic groups, they are not likely to have adequate samples to draw from.

Or if the person they drew from had family that actually migrated to the area recently then it is not as likely to be as accurate either. So it's not an exact science yet. It is offering something rather than nothing to start with.

While all DNA research companies appear to do the same thing, they are often different and can utilize different tools to discover DNA. A few nuances of the more popular ones will be shared to assist those interested in using one.

Africanancestry.com is one of the oldest companies and specializes in African Ancestry expressly claiming the largest number of DNA

samples to compare. They claim to have 33,000 samples from across Africa. Their tests are done by marking the DNA through mother or father line tracing it back to a direct grand or great grandparent. This means they can trace the mothers mothers mothers mothers line... and find an ancestor. They do not however trace multiple lines. For instance they can't trace your mothers father's mothers line. In 8 generations , there are 256 direct ancestral lines but only 1 can be traced. On the other hand, that one line can often be traced back to a specific African ethnic group because of the extensive research they did with the number of people in the population population group and the research done on African ethnic groups. They also claim to not share your DNA with other research companies thus protecting your privacy. The DNA test as of this writing averaged \$300.

Ancestry.com offers a DNA test that test autosomal DNA meaning the mother and father's combined DNA. Their population sample is worldwide and they claim a population sample of 13000 in Africa according to their 2018 updates. Their samples are broken down into Countries and not ethnic groups so while it can narrow down region, it is not able to narrow down to ethnic group. Countries were established by Europeans who divided the regional boundaries but did not care about ethnic affiliation. They will give a full DNA percentage based on your total DNA as well. They also have a nuance that can take the information from your family tree and match it with others family tree and those who have taken DNA tests that will allow you to confirm your ancestors through your cousins. For instance, if you have traced your ancestry back 4 generations and taken a DNA test and someone unknown to you has also done the same... and they find that you both have matching names and DNA traced back to a common relative, it can create bridges. This is a a for profit company and part of the risk here is that your DNA

may be shared for research purposes. This may concern some. Each person is given an option that allows you to determine if your DNA can be shared or not. These test run about \$49-99 as of the time of this writing and the membership can vary from \$20 per month to yearly rates.

23 and Me offers DNA through mother line and father line and they offer ancestral mapping as well. Their population sample for Africa however remain relatively small. They trace to country and not ethnic group as well. They also have the added advantage of offering health risks that can give insight to ancestral health tendencies and predispositions. This company also is based on research and may share your DNA with other research companies.

Creating a Family Oriki

The above companies are just a few offering tests but will hopefully give you some guidelines to get started should you choose to. In choosing to this may help in the way of generational healing by sewing pieces of a broken legacy. To support this once you have obtained some information you may want to create a family Oriki, Poem, or Song for your family or an individual. Oriki is a Yoruba form of passing on oral information about those who have gone before and used to awaken their legacy. Oriki can be used to invoke divinities and Egungun but may just as well used to call your own. A family Oriki is created by documenting the qualities of the family or person and accomplishments. This is then turned into a poetic song that is sang out loud. This kind of thing builds family pride and can support the legacy by teaching the children. Song is much easier to remember than words as our ancestors found through passing generations of oral tradition. This is one of those ways. This task

can be done yourself if you are so inclined or talented or it can be handed over to one of the family wordsmiths, poets, rappers, singers, etc to create. Or it can be done as a family team building exercise at a reunion. If that isn't possible then it may be just helpful to find a family theme song that seems to represent your family and qualities or family values they hold dear. This can be used as a bonding method and also passed down.

Generational Legacy and Ancestral Healing

Now that we have covered establishing an altar or shrine and getting started, we can now deepen the work. In the beginning of this chapter, we explored ways that our ancestry can influence our lives directly and indirectly. Through the generations we inherit gifts and challenges. Ancestral gifts are qualities or talents that you inherited either by natural dna or family practices that can be helpful or blessings for yourself or others. Some may include skills that can generate income. Others may include tendencies or predispositions like the gift of visions or prophesy. Some individuals are born with calls or what is called a veil over their eye, head, or body. This is considered a gift that indicates the person has the gift of spiritual sight and can communicate and or see the ancestors. Some may learn of their ancestral gifts through talking to other family members who may share what grandma or your great uncle Billy used to do.

Ancestral Curses and Generational Trauma

Earlier in this chapter we discussed ancestral memory and trauma and how it can pass from one generation to another. These are kinds of ancestral curses that often plague the family and individuals. The

phrase ancestral curses is often loosely used but can speak to a number of manifestations.

- Passed from parent to child by way of the words they use toward the child. Projections such as being bad, or name calling can damage people and they pass that damage toward the next generation.
- Negative emotions towards the child. Some parents have unresolved anger surrounding the birth or the other parent that is projected onto the child, or having to raise the child.
- Anger at parents towards adult children when they cross over can leave serious repercussions for descendants.
- Chemical and biological Dependency curses- From drug, alcohol, or other addictive syndrome that are passed on from observation of habit, congenital inheritance from womb, chemical proclivity in dna.
- Can also be a bad habit or worldview, self concept. Can be deep fear and lack of self worth or value based on trauma experienced in the world. Can be from racism, sexism, colorism.
- Other habits may be smoking or poor food choices that cause recurrent dis-ease in the family. These may also involve family taboos that are broken.
- Acts of harm and causing trauma toward child. Child abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse.
- Actual family curses caused by jealous individuals or family enemies.
- Curses from ancestral trauma embedded into the DNA
- Curses from breaking that cause harm or making a covenant that one is bound
- Curses from killing innocent people

As you can see, these kinds of curses can vary greatly. Healing some ancestral curses often involve the need for a priest to support the work through offerings to Egungun and on the gravesites of the mother or father lineages. Many times because of the issue involving bloodlines, a life force offering is necessary. Receiving a Divination from a qualified priest can help to determine solutions to complicated problems and identify family taboos etc.

Initiation to Egungun, Orisa, the family Orisa, or receiving a hand of Ifa is often a way to break generational curses. This doesn't mean that the person is supposed to be a priest. In this case, it is to help one make progress in one's life and heal from ancestral spiritual trauma and generational curses.

Other things that can be done to support the work is therapy, acupuncture can assist with therapy for addictive issues, flower essences and homeopathy can help with negative emotions and trauma passed on in family. It would be necessary to consult with a qualified homeopathic practitioner to be most effective. The work often has to first be done individually and then extend to the rest of the family.

Etutu -Atonement

Atonement is a process that can break a generational curse. Atonement means At one Ment and refers to being at peace. This could apply with another person, family, spirit, Egun, divinity, etc. Atonement can take many forms but includes acknowledging the wrong done if known, asking for forgiveness and making an offering or compensation of some kind. There may also be a purifying rite or act as well.

Personal Ritual to Break Ancestral Curses

The following is a medicine for removing generational curses that may be applied for lay people. This is a modified one that does not involve sacrificing animals . Ones done by a priest would include the actual sacrifice. You may try this first and if something more complicated is needed, please consult a qualified priest.

Ingredients

Pork blood (Can be found at Chinese Markets) (optional)

Odundun (Around the World Plant)(Kalanchoe crenata)

Sunflower

Zinnia

Grind together all of the above ingredients into a paste.

Place inside a fresh coconut

Write down all of the issues you and or your family have been plagued by. Write down the names of those living who are likely to be affected by the curse. Write down the children as well as the adults. Include all who may pass it to another generation as well.

If you know how to mark Ogbe Alara then do so. If you don't , don't attempt and skip.

Chant the following:

Asanpa-ola-monigbogi

Dia fun won ni Egun are

Nibi won gbe gbe won tibi –tiran

Ebon i won ni ko se

Won si gbo ebo n be

Won rubo

Ogbogbo aguntan ni a fi fi epe fun elepe
Ewe Ikupero alede (sunflower)
Pero si awo nile ,pero si awo lodo
Ero wo niti Odundun
Ero wo niti wororo (aster- zinnia)
Ogbe otura bani tu egun ori ile idile yi ra
A daruko awon idile yi
A o sure fun won

Translation:

Asanpa-ola-monigbogi
Make ifa for the in Egun Are
Where their family is cursed from generation to the other
They were advised to offer ebo
They complied
It is mature sheep that we used to send back the curse
Ewe Ikupero alede (the Ikupero in the front of my house (sunflower)
Bring calmness to awo at home
Bring calmness to awo at the river
The life of Odundun is known for peace
The life of rorowo is known for peace
Ogbe Otura breaks and end the curse on this family

At this point say your name and your issue you want resolved while holding the coconut. Say your prayers in the affirmative.. For instance , pray for wholeness and healing instead of “I don’t want to be sick”.

Call out each of the names of the family members on your list. Pray for them to be cleared, healed, able to move forward, etc.

Go to a river and offer to the river. If possible get the other family to do it together. Remove your clothes and send them down the river. Put on new white clothes.

Generational Healing Exercise

Coronation of Elders in the Family

As elders are considered close to the ancestors, many hold family history and even libraries of wisdom and knowledge. A coronation of Elders is a formal acknowledgement of such while they are still alive by the family. The elder is acknowledged as such and lifted up for their contribution to the family. This may be done at a family reunion or may be done just by the immediate family. The family may create a staff for them and a crown of sorts and even a throne for them. People may take turns sharing stories about their experiences with them and even they may be able to tell their stories.

Exercise: Make an Ancestral Quilt

This can be done on your own or as a fun activity at a family reunion.

Gather clothing items or pieces of fabric from the family and sew them together in a quilt or cloth. As a family member crosses over, add theirs.

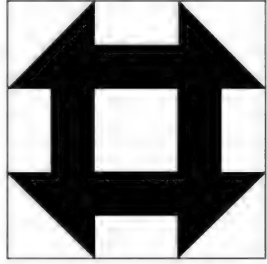
Other modern day ways may be to add together patches of cloth. Take pictures of ancestors and upload them to a computer. Purchase iron transfer paper so that they can be printed on them. Print the pictures on the transfer paper and iron them on to the white fabric. Then have someone sew them together to make a quilt. This quilt will then become your ancestral quilt meaningful to your family. It

can be placed or hung near your ancestral altar or you may cover yourself with it when doing ancestral work.

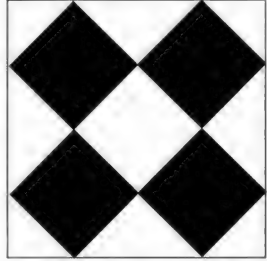




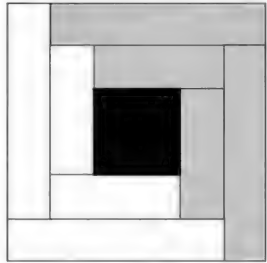
An ancestral quilt honoring Harriet Tubman. The quilt was created by Aisha Lumumba of Obaquilts.com depicting common symbols used in the Underground Railroad. Lumumba also makes special memory quilts in honor of loved ones who have passed on.



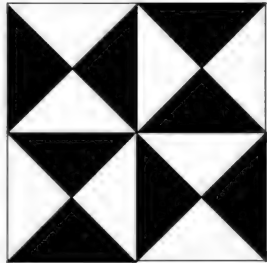
Monkey Wrench
Get ready! Gather the tools you'll need to build shelters, navigate the journey, or defend yourself along the way.



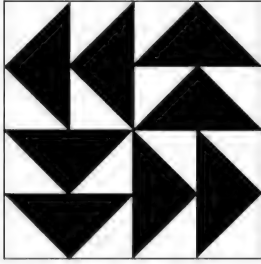
Crossroads
Keep going and travel to the crossroads in Cleveland, Ohio. Nicknamed "Rope", this vibrant Underground Railroad station was the last stop where slaves would board a boat to Canada.



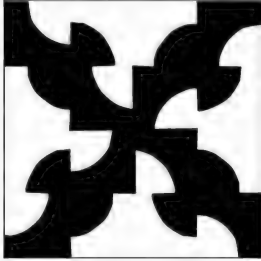
Log Cabin
You've reached a safe house. Congratulations you have found new friends who are friends of slaves.



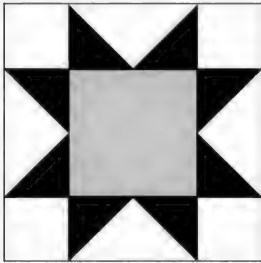
Bow Ties
You're looking pretty lathered. To disguise yourself as a freed slave, you'll need a change of clothes. The Bow Ties quilt block is a code to tell you someone will bring you nicer clothing.



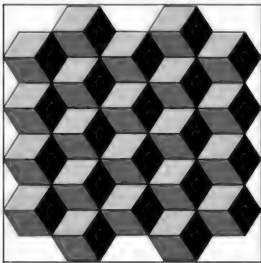
Flying Geese
Follow the migrating geese north to Canada (and freedom).



Drunkard's Path
Go back one space. This quilt block is a sign that slave hunters are near. Double back to elude them immediately!



North Star
Look to the skies to help you navigate the way. Follow the North Star to Canada.



Tumbling Blocks
The time has come to box up your belongings. Your escape will be happening soon!

Symbols for Underground quilts

Community Ancestral Ritual for Addressing Generational Trauma

Coming from the African diaspora in the United States, it is apparent that there is trauma that is collectively impacting large groups of African Diaspora communities. The trans Atlantic slave trade, hundreds of years of human captivity along with Jim Crow, inherent systemic racism, mass incarceration, and targeted drug wars has created large masses of community trauma and depression. This can be seen in inner city neighborhoods and in some families with excessive problems and drama among many family members.

Those who have crossed over can impact the world of the living. Unsettled souls and those who have died tragically can create problems for the living family members. Ancestrally, proper burial rites could settle the soul and help them cross over safely into the ancestral world. Without them, many souls would wander and become stuck as they are still attached to this world and not fully acclimated to the ancestral world. These produce energetic residue or ghosts who are unsettled and disturbed souls. What we have currently in the African diaspora are millions of souls who have died in the middle passage, millions more who died in captivity, millions more who have died from lynchings, police killings... Then those souls who are by products of a long generational trauma who have died from drug use, in jail, from shootings and murders. The tragedy of what has happened has created millions of unrested African diaspora souls who have died and are still wondering around unsettled between worlds. These souls are right in the center of our communities and plaguing family members unconsciously. This has a direct effect on the family and diaspora communities as a collective. I believe it has contributed to collective community depression and post traumatic generational syndromes especially in inner city neighborhoods.

It is with this in mind that I offer suggestions for groups of people and communities to engage in rites that begin to help settle these souls for the sake of families and communities. Rites of these kinds are intended to be engaged in regularly or yearly for the sake of community healing and engagement.

First stage are community grief and elevation rituals. Community grief and elevation rituals allow for sacred space for people to cry and relive trauma and pain through acknowledgement and tears. It also allows for elevation through collective prayer from the living for the dead. I first learned of Grief ritual from Sobomfu Some, a Dagara elder from Burkini Fasa who facilitated one in my areas. She spoke of the need for a community grieving process to help facilitate healing.

Because of the uniqueness of the situation for Africans in the diaspora, and having African ancestry from across the continent , it's important to engage in collective healing tools that may be drawn from the entire continent. Having participated in such rites, I found them helpful and healing. Unfortunately, while the rites addressed grief from the perspective of healing communities, they did not focus on healing the African diaspora. The rituals often involved those of European descent which often created significant inner conflict and pain for those of African descent who are carrying generational and modern day trauma inflicted by Europeans. They wanted and needed to work on this pain and heal, but could not because of the ever watchful eyes from the descendants of the abusers. In addition, the rites were often excessively expensive which often pushed out those Africans who could have benefited the most.

It was with this in mind that I suggest that if the community chooses to engage in such rites, that safe space be created for African diasporans to express grief outside of the eyes and ears of others whose ancestors may have contributed to the initial trauma. It is not intended as a personal slight to other allies in our cause. It is simply a matter of recognizing that healing requires feeling safe. If the presence of someone in healing space, no matter how well meaning the intention, only serves to aggregate the situation, it undermines the intended work and renders it worthless. If allies wish to be a part of the healing, then it is suggested that they donate money, resources and materials for those conducting the ritual to perform it but that do not disturb the ritual with their presence. This can be its own small act of atonement for ancestral karma and ancestral guilt. .

It is also essential that cost and fees not be a major factor for participation . If the community comes together and volunteers to facilitate it, high expense should not be needed. This ritual is not about making money at the expense of community pain and grief. It's about healing the community that has suffered from those who made profit off of their pain. It is also important that non judgment be a part of this process. Every participant included must understand that each person is valuable to the process and what goes on at the ritual stays there. It nor anyone there should never be fodder for anyone's ridicule or gossip. It must be kept sacred and holy for healing and not cluttered by any negativity. These three elements are essential for beginning the process of healing community generational ancestral trauma. Space is limited for sharing full details of such rites, but there are some Africans who are experienced in such rites for details and facilitation. Some Keys will be shared here for perhaps a community collective to come together to create your own healing rites in your city.

1. A large community space, park, etc.
2. Ideally takes place on or near new moon or on October 31 or November 1. (These are traditional days in the diaspora for acknowledging the dead and when the veils between worlds are said to be thinnest.
3. Community have a potluck where everyone brings something. Lots of tissue is essential.
4. All participants wear white and do a cleansing to begin.
5. A community altar or shrine is created with many white candles, a fire pit if outside, fire place, etc (Altar creates a portal for which the ancestors can come through. Fire offers light, purification and transmutation of energy. The altar can be a table with pictures and items to represent the ancestors. Or just the fire itself.
6. A large pool or fountain, stream or body of water. Represents cooling and healing as well as the middle passage and the bridge to ancestral worlds.
7. For community groups whose roles may be switched. Drummers or drumming music. Spotters who hold space for those grieving. Those who are grieving. Community Healers.
8. Spiritually Cleanse space. (Refer to Chapter 11)
9. Libation and inviting ancestors in. Call the names of those known and especially the unknown. Draw a circle with a cross in the middle and Offer kola nut in the center. While calling the names tap the ground or place heads to the ground. If kola nut is not available, then use coconut. For those who Divine with such elements, you may also determine what other elements the ancestors desire as a part of the process. Present some food and drink on the altar for the ancestors. Explain to them why you have called them. To support their healing, upliftment and elevation so that

- they can support the community in healing.
10. Spotters create a circle or semi circle around those who are grieving. Their job is to keep an eye of those grieving and to ensure they don't hurt themselves. They will also hear any pertinent messages.
 11. Those who are community Healers are to receive those who are stricken with excessive emotional pain and trauma. They soothe with cool water or water with white flowers on their heads, laying on of hands, and other gentle methods for calming and nurturing. Healers must ensure they are regularly cleansing themselves so as not to take on energetic debris from interactions. Community Healers need to be those who have already done some self work and are emotionally stable and in general good health.
 12. The grievors are general community members who will begin the process of remembering the ancestors who may have died tragically or in the middle passage. An announcer will call for this to begin. Drummers should begin a slow rhythmic beat like a heartbeat. Participants may begin to sing or hum or move lightly. As they feel moved, participants then walk up to the fire or candles and speak of what happened from their perspective. As they speak they may feel emotion and nervousness. Allow them to cry for the ancestors who are lost, their family, and any other hurt. As they cry, they throw their energy into the fire to be purified.
 13. Next the announcer will call for prayer. They then pray for their healing, and elevation in the ancestral world. They pray for crossing over safely and the release of their trauma from this world. Send them love and light. Ideally, prayers should be outloud. Those who are having more difficult times should be guided to the community Healers by the spotters. Once they are finished, they step back and go to the water to

cool and clear. Each should anoint their forehead and top of head with a little Shea butter to soothe their spirits.

14. Once they are clear and that set of grievors have finished, the roles switch and the spotters become the grievors and the original grievors become the spotters. The process is repeated.
15. Lastly the drummers and community Healers get to go while the others act as spotters for them. Some may choose to go and others may not. It is ok. The point is for the ancestors to benefit from the never of acknowledgement and atonement.
16. Ritual is closed by acknowledging what has happened and closing prayers.
17. Community can then come together to eat and commune of personal experiences.

This ritual can be modified and enhanced as needed by the collective performing the rites. If there are community Egungun priests or other priests present, Masquerades may be added as well as feeding community Egungun opa eguns and shrines. Other priesthood such as Congo , Akan, or Zulu can incorporate relevant ancestral rituals as well. Songs, if incorporated may vary from African ancestral songs to old Negro spirituals.

Resources

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Chapter 9

Tapping the Divine through Oracles

ÒGÚNDÁ-MÉJÌ

Àkókó ni wọn n dáfá,

Àkókó ni wọn n dibò,

À Àkókó ni wọn n lé gàgàgúgú

Awọn lo dáfá fún Orunmila

Yóò t'run bọ wá bá wọn dá'lé ayé,

Èbọ ni wọn ní kó ẹ,

O si gbe'bọ níbẹ o rubọ,

Orunmila pe le o a kere fi'nu sogbon

Translation:

ÒGÚNDÁ-MÉJÌ

Divination is a part of the initial forces of creation,

Revelation of spiritual mysteries is a part of the initial forces of creation, Transformation and self-agility is a part of the initial forces of creation,

These were the priests that made IFÁ divination for Orunmila
Orunmila was coming from the spiritual realm to partake in the creation of the physical plane,

Sacrifice was prescribed,

Orunmila did the prescribed sacrifice,

Orunmila, your efforts are successfully appreciated,

Orunmila, you are small in stature but have a gigantic realm of instrumentation embedded within you.

Once you have established your ancestral altar and begun the process of reconnection, it is time to deepen the connection through methods developed to communicate with them more effectively. Often people receive messages in dreams and intuit messages from ancestors and spiritual sources. These gifts are valuable and special for those that can. Sometimes however, just as in life, things can be misunderstood and communication can be confused. It is this reason, a method of confirmation and clarification is used to help us navigate these communications.

Orunmila is considered the owner of all Divination and the Orisa of Divine Wisdom. There are several layers of oracles that are used within the Ifa Orisa Tradition. The Oracle of Ifa is used solely by priests of Ifa called Babalawo and Iyanifas. These oracles consist of a Divination chain called an Opele or a set of sacred palm nuts called Ikin. Orisa Priests called Olorisa use a Divination method that is called Erindinlogun or Dilogun in the Diaspora. These consist of 16 cowries. Initiation and training is required to utilize both of the

above methods of divination. There is no exception to this.

Obi and Erin Divination are methods that can be used by anyone to begin to secure more definitive answers to questions as well as clarify messages given. Obi can come in a number of forms. Kola nut is one of the oldest and most used on the continent. This method is called Obi Abata. There is Obi Orogbo, a form used with the Bitter kola nut. Other methods often used in the diaspora but also still used on the continent as well is coconut. This is called Obi Agbon. There is also Obi Epa utilizing the nuts from a peanut. Another is Erin Divination that may use 4 -8 Cowrie shells.

Worldview of World as a Calabash

All Yoruba Divination systems are predicated on natural law based on its cosmology of the universe which it considers a cosmic Calabash. The Oracles express that natural law through a vital force that permeates all and expresses in the outer world. Within this Calabash, that vital force is binary in nature and manifests as complementary opposites. As a cosmic Calabash, it becomes Orun (invisible world) and Aye (visible world) with Orun at the top and Aye at the bottom. Other metaphors in Odu express this as a relationship between Obatala, a husband associated with the white light of heaven and Odudua a wife expressed as the primordial darkness of the Earth. This becomes a metaphor for light and darkness, male and female. From an Ifa perspective, everything is contained within this universe and it is binary in nature. Thus, all of the oracles are binary representing the clear polarities expressed in the cosmology.

In fact, this is not just a Yoruba worldview. This worldview permeates the entire continent, Asia, and extends into fundamental

principles of science. The Hakata of Southern Africa, The Skiddy of Madagascar, are a few examples of African Oracles reflecting this binary world viewpoint. This perspective can be seen as far back as 5000 years ago in ancient Egypt. Oracle scrolls found in the Valley of Kings by Napoleon's expedition demonstrated this understanding as binary stars. This Oracle scroll attributed to priests of Tehuti is dated as 3500 BC.

We find this concept extends into the 21st century in the language of computers. Computers utilize a binary language as well in a pattern of zeros and ones. This gives a greater understanding of the depth of our ancestral wisdom being the basis for obtaining information from the ancient to the modern.

Science recognizes this principle in the study of energy itself. All energy is contained within these 2 forces. These forces are expressed as assertive kinetic energy and the yielding potential energy. These forces can also be described as active and receptive, assertive and yielding and in Asia as yin and yang. We can see this energy expressed further in the forms of

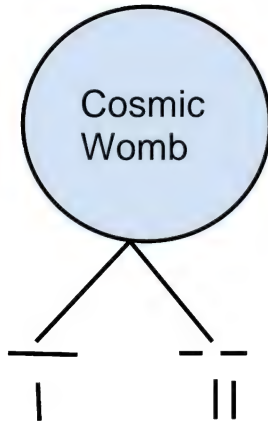
Kinetic	Potential
Sympathetic	Parasympathetic
day	night
heaven	Earth
external	internal
hot	cold
dry	moist
masculine	feminine
Light	dark
Superficial	deep

Known
Individual

Unknown
Indivisible

This law of natural development and the cosmic womb is also expressed as Odu , the center of the Ifa oracle and the Wife of Orunmila. It has multiple meanings because Odu is expressed both as that from which the wisdom of the oracle comes, as well as that which the oracle births. The binary principles extend from 2 to 4 to manifesting in 16 and ultimately 256 principles also called Odu. So when you hear the word, Odu, the meaning behind it will depend on the context in which it is used. Odu, as a woman reflects that everything that comes into this world is first birthed out of a dark womb...including the world itself.. This womb can be described as the black hole, the heavens, the sum total of noumenal and phenomenal worlds.. primordial waters of space, etc. Within this primordial womb, this oneness, lay infinite possibilities for expression. Because it is likened to a womb and everything that manifests is birthed out of this primordial watery darkness and gives birth to light.

This womb gave birth to twins male and female or strong and yielding energy and these strong and yielding energies became the polarities expressed in the world as complementary opposites. Neither good or bad better or worse.. but natural expressions of energy within all things.



As it relates to Oracles, the Divination tools will generally reflect two sides. Depending on the pattern that shows up when these are thrown, the answer emerges.

The following are examples of the sides reflected in a number of Oracles

The following images are some of some Oracles reflecting binary energy of open and closed. The first three reflected in a binary form of a nut. The last , Erin, is in the form of 4 cowries.



Above 4 lobed Kola Nut Obi Abata



Obi Agbon Coconut



Obi Epa Peanut



Orogbo – Bitter Kola



Erin -4 Cowries

As mentioned, the Obi Agbata (Kola Nut) is considered one of the

earliest Divination tools in West Africa to be used. It is used far and wide by any person trained in the technique. One of the reasons for its popularity is its ability to be used as an offering as well as Divination. As a 4 lobed is also called Iya Obi (Mother Obi).

How the Kola Nut Came to Be Itan in Ogbe Odi of the Odu corpus

The divinities began fighting each other and Olodumare decided to invite the four most balanced deities to find a resolution. They were Suruu, Aje, Elinini, Aye. They deliberated as to why the youth no longer respected the elders as ordained by Olodumare. Everyone prayed for unity and balance. While praying, Olodumare reached up and grasped some the prayers in the air with the right hand. The same was done with the left hand. The contents were taken and planted into the ground. She quickly grew and blossomed fruit . As they matured, they dropped to the ground. Aye took them to Olodumare and he told her to go prepare the fruit as she liked. She tried to cook and find other ways to prepare the fruit all to no avail. She returned to a Olodumare unsuccessful. It was then that Elinini volunteered to try. She tried and broke the capsule, cleaned, and washed the fruit. She kept them in their leaves to keep them fresh. They stayed fresh for 14 days. She started eating the raw nuts and discovered how they made her strong and fresh. She then took the nuts back to Olodumare and told everyone that the nuts when taken with prayers could be eaten raw. Olodumare decreed that since Elinini, who was the oldest, discovered the use of the kola nuts, that the oldest

in any group or gathering should always be given Kola nut. Also that it should be used in prayer since it was a product of prayer. Aye then took kola nut to Earth and planted it. It was decreed that it would only grow in places where the elders and ancestors were respected.

Kola nut is traditionally used as offering as a means of settling disputes as well as establishing contracts. An offering of peace and welcome into the home. For general good health and well being. It is also used as offering to Ori, Egun, Egbe, Orisa as a means of securing blessings. As an offering the Kola nut can even save one from death. So kola nut is the favorite to use both as an offering and as a Divination tool. Osa Meji is what confirms the use of kola nut for both Divination and offering to the divinities as established by Esu.

The Kola Tree was going down to Okiti Efon and advised to offer sacrifice for her children. She thought that since she had so many, she would be fine and did not offer sacrifice. When she go there she bore children. In the meantime, Esu explained to the king that kola nut should be used for offerings and Divination for the greatest blessings. So the people begin using it as such and are the children of the Kola Nut.

Orogbo Bitter Kola

Orogbo also known as bitter Kola is another nut for divination. While they share the name Kola, it is not the same as Kola nut. Orogbo is comprised of 2 words, Oro and gbo meaning round and longevity respectively. It is considered a round nut that produces blessings, strength, long life, and power. Its health benefits coincide with those attributes when eaten. While Kola nut is considered

female, Orogbo is considered male. It is used often by Sango and Ogun. It is often eaten and used with prayer especially for sound health. It can be used as a divination tool by cutting it in half. It is not naturally divided like Kola nut so it must be divided by the user into halves.

**Okun sun are nare
Osa su legbe legbe
Onibu nrebu
Alas an ni rasan
Asan naa paapaa
Awo ori ota
Awon agbaagba imole lo wo gbeyin
Won rip e ko suwon
Won subu yege
Won fi rungbo diya
Won firun dinu peepee pee
Won mu ogun orogbo
Won mu ogun obi
Won fi difa fun isese
Eyi tii se olori oro ni ife
Won tun um otalenigba din lerin
A difa fun isese
Eyi ti se olori oro ni isalu orun
A difa fun sango arabambi
Orisa ti bologbo leri
Ajisaye gbege loko iya olorogbo
Sango ooo , orisa to loju orogbo
Ma ba mi já , da eko iya mi nu
Jeki PE laye , bi orogbo se npe
Jeki ferigi jobi
Ki wa fi opa tile gejegeje
Ifa o gbo o
Orunmila o gbo
Ela osin o gbo
Edumare tire lemi o ma se
Ase**

Translation of the above verse

The ocean is expansive and extensive with infinite characteristics

The sea is mysterious and nebulous

The deep ocean is unclear, inexorable and full with mystery

The deep sea share the same character

Inexplicable belongs to the realm of divinities

Thus divine ifa for the mysterious head stone of ages

The elder look aback

They discovered the mystery embedded in life were inexplicable

They bowed their head in prayer and respect

Shave their beads as an obeisance to the divinity

Open their mouth in awe, calling the mysterious name of the Almighty

Using first twenty sets of orogbo

Gathering twenty sets of obi

Using them to cast ifa oracle for custodian of tradition

The mysterious head chief of ifa oracle at the ancient city of Ife

The elder also gather another set of two hundred fifty six orogbo

To cast ifa oracle for custodian of tradition

The chief priest of tradition at the spiritual place of existence

Thus divine ifa oracle for sango arabambi

The divinity that intimidate death and her cohort

The lord strong in battle, blessed with long life

The formidable husband of orogbo seller

Oh yee sango

The divinity that have the unique eyes of orogbo

Never attack me and never destroy the wares of my mother

Let me live long, like orogbo, in the physical state of existence

Let me use my molar teeth to eat kolanuts

Let me reach old age with sound health and walk with stick

Ifa, let your blessing radiate my life

Ela let your success be my lot

Oh God, bless my path, I shall serve you and adore you forever

Ase

Coconut and Agbon Obi

Kola nut and Orogbo, however, was not found in the new world of the African Diaspora so one of the alternative forms became more

prominent in the new world. Coconut is a popular substitute for Kola Nut in the diaspora.

The Odu Irete Ogbe highlights Coconut's ability to offer ire in ones life:

Àgbọ̀n mò nì 'wà,
Awo ilé Agbonmiregun,
A dífá fún Agbonmiregun-Oloja - Oribojo
Ó jí ó lóun ò rí rẹ̀gún ẹ̀,
Èbọ̀ nì wọ̀n ní kó ẹ̀,
Ó sì gbẹ̀bọ̀ níbẹ̀ ó ríbo,
Njé, Àgbọ̀n mò nì 'wà,
IFÁ jẹ̀un ní 'rẹ̀gú ire gbogbo,
Ìrẹ̀gú Ajé, Ìrẹ̀gú ọ̀mọ̀,
Àgbọ̀n mò nì 'wà,
IFa jẹ̀un ní 'rẹ̀gú ire gbogbo,
Ìrẹ̀gú ọ̀lá, Ìrẹ̀gú ọ̀là,
Àgbọ̀n mò nì 'wà,
Ifa jẹ̀un ní 'rẹ̀gú ire gbogbo,
Àgbọ̀n mò nì 'wà.

*Coconut with inspirational characters,
The officiating household priest of Agbonmiregun
Made divination for Agbonmiregun-Oloja - Oribojo
He wakes and cannot count on his blessings, Sacrifice was
prescribed,
He complied,
Coconut with inspirational characters,
Ifa allow me to count on all blessings,
Blessings of riches,
Blessings of children,*

*Coconut with inspirational characters,
Ifa allow me to count on all blessings,
Blessings of wealth,
Blessing of prosperity,
Coconut with inspirational characters,
Ifa allow me to count on all blessings,
The coconut with inspirational characters.*

Erin Cowrie Shells

Cowrie shell divination came from Olokun and Osun worshippers. Erin means 4 in Yoruba alluding to the use of 4 cowries. It is also used across west Africa in a number of ethnic groups. Erin 4 shell cowries also came into use in the new world through 2 methods. One is simply as 4 Cowrie shells. The other as Cowrie shells glued to the inside of coconut reflecting the male side and female side. The later developed in the African diaspora. These differences reflect the nuances in potential Obi answers available . The Obi Abata Kola nut and Cowrie with coconut shell are able to offer 5-9 interpretations. Erin cowries have from 5-16 potential answers. Coconut has 5 potential answers.

There pros and cons for using each one. The Kola nut for instance isn't easily found outside of Africa. They also don't keep well and must be used while fresh making it more difficult to maintain. Coconut is easier to access in the diaspora. Cowrie Shells can be used repeatedly. While some suggest they cannot be used as an offering, it is likely that they used to be used as an offering given cowries used to be used for money. Peanut is another method not widely used but has been used in traditional forms.

A comparison chart is shown to demonstrate some of the nuances between systems. All, however can be used in the basic 5 Answer form. It is the 5 interpretation form that will be used in this book for beginners. The following may be slightly modified from lineage to lineage but the basic form is the same.

Name	#of Answers	Pros	Cons
Kola Nut	5-9	Can be used as offering and divination	Not easily accessible in new world
Coconut	5	Can be used as offering and Divination	Less answers than African Kola
Coconut Cowries	5-9	Easily made, can be used repeatedly	cannot be used as offering
Erin-4 cowries	5-16	Easily found / maximum potential answers	Not used as offering

How to Cast Divination with Obi or 4 Cowries

Prepare and gather the following items:

A bowl or glass of fresh water

Water offers cooling, cleansing and peace. Coolness is a highly desirable trait in a diviner and necessary to get the most out of your answers.

A white candle or oil lamp with Shea butter

(Optional) Serves to spiritually and physically illuminate the altar space and offer light. They also add strength and power to the divination at hand. It is given as offering to the ancestors in order to illuminate them and bring understanding.

A notebook used just for your divination

It is important to records of your divinations. Documenting your readings will help you to be able to determine common themes over time and give you the ability to reflect on larger issues. It also helps to prevent asking the same question repeatedly. In fact, don't even re-ask the question a different way unless the divination process itself calls for a rephrasing of the question.

A Divination Surface

The divination surface can be the ground or Earth, on a mat, or on a clean cloth or white handkerchief. Some people draw a circle on the ground with chalk or efun and throw inside the circle.

Creating Sacred space

If you have established an ancestral altar from the last chapter, ideally it should be done in front of the shrine or altar. The process is intended to interact with the sacred and so reverence should be given to this process. If not in front of an altar, then at least in a quiet

space where you won't be disturbed. It is important that meditation be a part of this process as you contemplate the answers.

Preliminary Guidelines for throwing Obi

1. Your ideal question should be able to produce a yes or no answer. *Be aware that yes and no are not absolutes.* There are reasons for yes and reasons for no that can often be clarified with more advanced divination methods. There may be things that need to be done to make a no, yes, or compromise the yes given. This tool is to give you a guideline for basic guidance.
2. Avoid asking what you already know or common sense tells you.
3. Avoid consulting when you are sleepy, busy, or in a rush. You are having a conversation with and that requires making time and being fully present for guidance.
4. Ask one question at a time and not multipart questions. For instance don't ask something like, If I get the job, will I have enough money to buy a home. (This kind of question is asking 2 questions. 1..If they will get the job. And 2 if they can buy a home. This makes it unclear and one answer if contingent on another answer. This will produce a unclear answer.
5. Avoid performing Divination for others..especially if they are not present or haven't given permission. It is considered unethical and invasive to consult without their permission. In addition, because you are consulting your ancestors and not theirs, it may be inaccurate.
6. Avoid asking the same question twice. It will produce an inaccurate answer. The oracle knows you are trying it. If

however , a month or so has passed, and circumstances have changed then it may be acceptable to reask.

7. Prepare a full line of questions designed to bring out details. Example. Are you in need of an offering? If yes, would you like food? Would you like drink? Would you care for chicken? Do you want a sample? Do you prefer a full plate? Do you need a stronger offering? It can be also used to determine if the offerings once presented is accepted? If they are not accepted, then you can begin to ask if something more is needed and what? This is where this kind of oracle can bring further clarity and better communication. The line of questioning should be as if one is consulting family and conversational.
8. Avoid asking questions of should or should not. It is better to ask if doing something will be favorable for you or not. Ask also if there is a challenge, is there an offering that you can do that supports making it more favorable.
9. Stay in your lane! If you reach a situation where the answers are confusing or you are not understanding, stop. You may be too close to the situation and you need to either A. Try again another day when you are more settled or two consult a priest for a more detailed divination for clarification.
10. Once you have completed your questions, then ask permission to close the oracle. Because you are asking ancestors, and this is a conversation, while you may be done, they may not be. So asking for permission to close gives them an opportunity to add to the conversation something they may need to make you aware of. If the answer is no, then you may ask the area in your life that they wish to comment? Asking one by one you can ask
 - a. Do you want to add to the current topics just now discussed?

- b. Is there another topic you wish to elaborate?
- c. Then you can itemize different areas like Love and relationships, money, homelife, work, business, family, friends and associates, etc. Until to come to the topic they want to talk about.
- d. You can also ask if there is a character or behavior they want you to begin or end.
- e. Continue asking until you receive a yes. It is ok to close. This means they are finished and satisfied that you know what they need, want, or wanted to convey.
- f. As you practice it, you will become more intuitive about what they answers mean and questions to ask.

Suggestion for opening line of questions

When asking about doing something?

Is doing _____ in alignment with my Ori?

Is _____ a suitable partner for me as a mate? Business? Etc.

Is are the conditions favorable for me to _____?

Is _____ a favorable path to take?

Will _____ yeild a good profit?

Methodology for Casting Obi

1. Write down your question in your notebook and leave room for documentation.
2. Place your obi in cool water to refresh and then retrieve them.

3. With the Obi touch the four corners of the divination surface.

Begin an opening prayer and or Iba to set the tone.

Omi Tutu (Sprinkle the Cool water)

Ile Tutu (Freshen my house)-sprinkle water in house or sacred space

Ori Tutu (Freshen my head) sprinkle cool water on your head or Ori

Obi Tutu (Oracle be refreshed)- Dip Obi in water.

Egun tutu (Ancestors be refreshed)- Sprinkle cool water on the altar

or shrine

Tutu Esu (Refresh Spirit of the crossroads)- sprinkle water by the door

,on Esu if you have one or the back of the head.

4. Next say: (You can speak English or Yoruba)

Egun mo pe o (repeat 3 times)

Ancestors I call you,

Egun fun mi ni ire,

Ancestors bring me good fortune,

Egun fun mi ni alaafia,

Ancestors bring me well being,

Egun fun mi ni ilera,

Ancestors bring stability to my home,

Egun san mi

Ancestors guide me

Modupe, modupe pupo,

I thank you, I thank you very much,

Ase! Ase! Ase O!

May it be so!

5. Next ,Touch 4 corners and 4 points of your body
(A) top of head, (B) back of neck, (C) right shoulder, (D) left shoulder

Then hold them in both hands and repeat the following:

Akinmoran! Akinmoran! Akinmoran! This means, ” May the divine spirit in heaven come and assist the diviner on Earth. “

6. Bring the Obi to your mouth and breath on the obi. Then say Obi Egungun (I cast Obi to my ancestors (or Ori or Egbe) and then ask the question.

And then let them drop to the divining surface. Study the pattern that falls to determine the answer.

Simple Obi Divination Interpretations

The five position method of interpreting is as follows.

After you throw the obi, Agbon, or Cowrie onto the divination tray, mat, or cloth, read it by interpreting how many sides are up or down. Below demonstrates what up or down looks like with each item.

Interpretations

Alafia/ Ilera/ Ogbe- 4 mouths up



Alafia or Ilera is “Yes” with Ire. There is joy and support in the subject matter. All energy is open and everything is going well. Says yes... move forward with focus and a sense of peace and calm. You should be humble and avoid arrogance in your move forward and be gracious to those who offer support. Can mean sound health, good fortune, traveling, wealth, and other blessings. It can come with a warning to be aware of its wide open nature and ability to remain stable. Can indicate an extreme of energy so one must be aware.

Etawa / Eta Iwa 3 Cowries up



Essentially the meaning of Etawa is “Maybe or uncertain as it depends on your character and how you behave in the situation. In other words there is more going on that it appears and requires further inquiry to determine details. It can indicate that there is a lack of resources . Iwa is behavior or character. This means depending on your character or how you approach it. For instance, if you are a fiery or impatient person and the situation requires a cool calm temperament to be successful. Your ability to calm yourself will determine its success.

Asking questions about which approach or character is best can eventually lead to a clear “Yes” or “No”. For all practical purposes, if you are a beginning and are not able to discern more clear details consider Iwa just a no or consult a priest to perform a more detailed divination.

Eji Ife/ Ejife 2 cowries up and 2 down



Ejife is “Yes”! No doubt about it! No need to keep asking, simply proceed from that “yes” on. It comes with great balance, stability and equilibrium. Gives blessings in love and affections or from people. It can represent a steady stream of energy. Also may indicate a need to give an offering to Mother Earth. Touch the ground to show gratitude.

Okanran/ Okan/ Okanse 3 cowries down



Although Okanran often is considered to mean probably not. The

way is closing. Don't overestimate abilities. Seek guidance from more experienced people and secure support to get it done. It indicates there are some blocks that supercede the opportunity. It can also indicate a lack of motivation or commitment to the situation. Ask again to clarify. If the answer is Alafia or Ejife, then yes but move cautiously and get some support and have patience as it may take time. If the 2nd answer is Oyeku ot Okaran, then its no. If it is Eta Iwa, then probably not because behavior? Character is an issue.

Oyeku 4 cowries mouth down



The meaning of Oyeku can be quite varied across region. While it can mean a definite “No” with the appearance of Oyeku , it could also means mean that the Ancestors (Egun) need to speak, emphasizing the answer to the original question. A new line of questioning may be required while discontinuing the current line. It can represent various unseen forces at play and kind of trying to move through the dark. Sometimes Oyeku can offer protection in closing the door. If in doubt, no is the answer.

Some nuances to be aware of are when the cowries fall with 3 up or 3 down. To gain more clarity, you can throw again. If the 1st throw is 3 up in Eta Iwa and the 2nd throw reveals Ejife or Alafia... then you may move forward with the precautions set forth. If it comes out as Okanran or Oyeku, its not likely to turn out well because there is something fundamental missing element. If it comes out as Eta Iwa again that means you are going to need an attitude adjustment because your attitude or behavior will sabotage the good that could be there.

If the 1st throw is Okanran, and the 2nd throw is Okanran, Oyeku, or Eta Iwa, it is still likely no . If it is Alafia or Ejife, it can be achieved but you will need to focus on cultivating the qualities necessary to make the most of it.

The 2nd throw doesn't have to be done at this stage. This is beginner level so if it is not clear for you how to approach the 2nd throw, don't. Just go with the first throw.

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Chapter 10

Egbe/ Alaragbo-

Tapping your Soul Mates

Obara Iwori

Omo kere nii feyinju tanna ale

Little children use their eyes as lamps at night

A dia fun Egbe

Cast divination for Egbe

Won ni won o rubo

They were asked to offer sacrifice

Awon Egbe ni n torun bo wale aye

A group of Egbe was coming from heaven to the Earth

Bi won ba sun

When they slept

Won o baa moo lalaa ti o sunwon

Their sleep would be full of nightmares

Won o moo riiyan

They would see their mate's in heaven

Won ni Egbe ni won o moo toju

They were told to take care of their Egbe

Won ni ire Opolopo fun won

They wished them a lot of good things

Won ni bi on ba sun nile aye

They told then that if they slept here

Won tun moo ri awon araa tohun

They would be dreaming about the ones in heaven

Bo won ba si tun ji soju aye

On waking from the sleep

Won tun moo ba awon tihaahin sere

They would be playing with the ones here on Earth

Ifa pe ka moo ni ekuru funfun

Ifa told us to offer Ekuru (a dish made from ground black eyed peas)

Ki awon tohun naa o moo rihun je

So that the heavenly mates would have to eat

Won ni yoo ni isinmi

They will be peaceful

Ni won ba rubo

They then offered the sacrifice

Ni won ba isinmi

They were peaceful

Ni won ba da Egbee le

And therefore created Associations

Won ba pe ni Egbe Alaraagbo ni aye

And named it an Associations (Alaraagbo) on Earth

Won a legbe aye ni o nii je t'Orun o te

It is the Association in heaven that would protect the sanctity of the one on Earth

Ni won wa n jo ni won n yo

They then started to dance and rejoice

Ni won nyin awon Babalawo

They were praising their Babalawo

Awon Babalawo nyin Ifa

Their Babalawo was praising Ifa

O ni bee lawon Babalawo tawon wi

They said it was exactly as their Babalawo predicted

Omo kekere nii feyinju tanna ale

It is little children that use their eyes as lamp in the night

A dia fun Egbe

Cast divination for Egbe

Awon Egbe ni n torun bo wale aye

Egbe was coming from heaven to the Earth

Ebo ni ki won o se, Ki won si t'aju Egbe won laiye

They were asked to offer sacrifice, and take care of their Egbe on Earth

Eyin Egbe mi E mo mo je nte o

Do not let me be disgraced

Kaka ki Egbe aye o te T'orun o nii je

Rather, for the Association on Earth to be disgraced The one in heaven will not allow it

E mo mo je a te o

Please don't let us be humiliated

In the chapter on Ori, we discussed how as souls we choose our spiritual path on Earth. In the chapter on Egun, we discussed how our ancestral bloodlines continue in the spiritual realm and we are able to tap their support. With those as a foundation , we are prepared to discuss the next concept and that is of Egbe. Egbe also known as Alaragbo encompasses our spiritual companions and guides in the spiritual realm. This transcends blood relatives and speaks to more of a soul family or community. Further, Egbe

includes our own spiritual double in Orun.

Some of these concepts are quite different from the western concept of the world. The west assumes that the world of the living is much different from the world of the non living. The Ifa worldview is that Orun has layers and not just one place or dimension. One of those dimensions is a world that mirrors this one. It is one of the reasons you place food in this world and the other world is able to reach it. While Orun is much bigger than this world, we are still able to connect to it.

The Enikeji

When we decide to come to the world of the living, we make arrangements as discussed in the chapter on Ori. Ifa lore says that we go to the house of Ajala and choose a destiny...this is what is encompassed in the Ori. Also during that time, a spiritual twin or double is also created. This spiritual twin or double is called Enikeji. When it is time for us to incarnate and be born on Earth or the material realm, one will incarnate and the other one will remain in the non visible plane as a counterpart. The twin will be identical to the one on Earth in terms of character although it may function on a higher realm. It is not as contaminated or weighed down by the world of matter as we are. This concept is identical to the Ancient Egyptian concept of the Ka as the spiritual double. Both view it as an essential part of us that impacts our life experiences. It also points to what science is now calling the multiverse where 2 or more worlds exist simultaneously.

Obara oyeku explain the essence of having enikeji Orun (Heavenly replica)

Awon omode ni won fi eyinju tan ina ale

A dia fun Egbe
Egbe lo ti Ikole Orun bo wa si aye
Ebo ni won ni ko mase
E dakun,
E mon mon je ki a te
Kaka ki egbe aye te
Torun ko ni je.

Translation:

It is the little children that use their eyes as lamp in darkness
Perform Ifa divination reading for Egbe
When Egbe was coming from heaven to Earth.
He was instructed to offer sacrifice
We implore you don't let us fall into disgrace
Instead for the Egbe on Earth to suffer disgrace
His heavenly replica will come to his aid
Please come to our aid don't allows us to be disgrace.

Or Osa Meji

Isansa meji awon ni ki ara won jeejeje
Dia fun Egbe aye, a bu fun ti orun
Awon borokini Orun, ko ni je ki ti aye o te.

Translation:

The two fugitives usually greet each other by whispering
Perform Ifa divination for Egbe on Earth
Also cast divination with one in heaven
The heavenly dignitaries will not allow the ones on Earth to be put
to dishonor.

The Enikeji is significant in that it has a major influence on our personality and attitude. It influences how we carry ourselves as well as how we interact with others. If your Enikeji is a leader in Orun, you are likely to be one on Earth. The Enikeji is also able to come to the support of you, it's twin Earth. We can see from the above Odus that the appeal to the Enikeji is to not allow us to fall into disgrace or dishonor. So the Enikeji is not just a replica, but also one to appeal to for support.

Ojiji

As an extension of the Ori concept, the concept of Ojiji arises again. We might recall Ojiji in the Ori chapter as the Ifa concept of the shadow. It is created as soon as we are born and leaves as soon as we die. We learned the Ojiji is a part of the Ori complex, and Ori is connected to our greatest destiny we plan. Ojiji, however, is also connected to Egbe via our Enikeji. In this capacity, Ojiji acts as a recorder of all of our deeds while here on Earth. The Ori is the goal post and plan. The Ojiji is the live recording of what is actually taking place. Everything counts here. There is never a day or moment you are without your shadow and it is recording everything. This record is recounted for review once you leave. People who have had near death experiences report that when they died, they saw how every detail of their whole life flashed before their eyes. This was the Ojiji replaying the events it documented. As it relates to the Enikeji and the work of Egbe, it can validate if the work you came to do was done or not. It can also remind you of the work you came to do.

The Ojiji also influences personality because it is also tied to our memory and subconscious via what it records. Even in the dream world, we can experience our shadow through our fears and

insecurities. Old memories that we consciously forgot. It remembers the time you were 18 months and mom and dad was yelling and how you felt scared . Since then, you may respond to arguments a certain way. You may be an adult and not recall how a certain sabotaging or unproductive behavior began. The Ojiji does and sometimes there is a need to feed the Ojiji through a special ceremony. While what has happened cannot be changed, your course or direction taken can be corrected. Feeding the Ojiji can address issues where the individual is off kilter from something that has happened.

Soul Mates

In addition to the development of the Enikeji, also part of those plans made in Orun prior to coming to Earth, we discuss who is coming with us. As there are many souls also coming to Earth, they too, are determining their own work and experiences they intend to have while here also. That will involve a certain degree of planning and coordinating with one another as each determines the role they might play in each other's lives. Each role may help us achieve our incarnation objectives. These become soul contracts where we agree to function in a certain capacity for another person.

These other souls are also members of our soul groups and companions in Orun. Many incarnate at the same time, and as children are considered age mates in traditional culture. As time develops, the age mate consideration diminishes as we meet others and our world expands. We then meet others who are a part of our Egbe and feel affinities for them in one way or another. In the West, the term soul mates are considered souls who are connected as loving partners. While this can be the case with Egbe Soul Mates, it's not a thing where there is only one. Although we will learn later how something close may influence it. For general purposes,

though, the soul mates that are a part of our Egbe, can be many and function in many different roles in our lives. On Earth they are considered Egbe Aye because they are in this realm.

An example might be that you came to this realm and wanted to learn about power. You might choose to be born to parents that were impoverished thereby lacking financial power. At some point you go to school. You may meet up with people who will become your best friends. You may feel a certain familiarity with them because deep down, as a soul you “remember” them. They are in your soul group or Egbe. One in your group may have chosen to be a bully for a time. Keep in mind, these choices are made from a souls perspective and not human. We can’t grow if we aren’t challenged so they may choose to act as bully to assist others in learning how to deal with them. All human experiences are temporary and not arbitrary.. So the one that is a bully is pushing the weaker ones to learn how to fight back... or how to handle people who abuse power. That lesson, once learned may catapult them into more lessons of power as teen angers. Those lessons may have you encounter being in positions of power now in high school. Maybe you are elected by your peers to be the student government president or organize a sit in. Maybe during that time, you encounter a teacher.. another part of the Egbe, that recognizes you and introduces you to someone who gets you a scholarship to college or program that helps you develop. You meet other friends (Soul mates) that support and join you in the work as a leader.

This lends to Egbe because these individuals also have spiritual doubles and all are acting in association with one another. They are companions on this realm and the invisible realm. So we are born with a group of companions....soul mates ,who come with us to share in common work. It points to the fact that our entire lives are designed for growth and experiences. The role of Egbe is to assist

us with whatever our mission is and to support that work.

In addition, we also leave some soul companions behind because it's not their time to incarnate. The spiritual world doesn't have a concept of time or lifetimes as we do in the material world. A lifetime can be a couple hours in the spiritual realm. It's what makes Egbe more profound because these are individuals who are likely to know you across lifetimes....not just one.. You may incarnate in and out of lifetimes together playing different roles of best friend, mentor, schoolmate, boyfriend/ girlfriend, husband/ wife, business associate...even enemy.

Those that are left behind are called Egbe Orun. They are able to act as spiritual guides and support behind the scenes. They also are able to continue to interact with our double and the doubles of our friends on Earth that also remained in that realm. Like ancestors, we are able to call on them for support and feed them. Like ancestors, they can also respond and speak to us in our dreams and in visions. In fact, they may be more powerful than ancestors because Egbe may have been around to know your destiny when you chose it and may be there to help you achieve it. Ancestors, while supportive, may not know your destiny. This is coming from a higher realm. Egbe, in this capacity also may have the ability to change your destiny or modify it.

The Odu Ifa Ogunda Ofun explains how involved Egbe Orun can be in our personal lives and why it's important to understand their role and recognize them as supports.

Ajankulu mon kulu

Dia fun orunmila

nijo ti ohun ati awon egbe re jo n se ogbe inu si ara won

Awon egbe re wifun

Gbogbo igba ti o n roko awa re ni
Ajankulu mokulu se wa di epe
Igba ti o n ko ebe awa ati iwo ni
Ajankulu mokulu se wa di epe
Gbogbo igba ti o n ya oka awa re ni
Ajankulu mokulu se wa di epe
Igba o n sun Orun omo nikan ni a ni ki o fe ola ara re.

Translation

Ajankulu mon kulu (this is an ancient name of Ifa priest)
Carry out ifa divination reading for orunmila
When orunmila is having dispute with his egbe(the Astral mates)
They told him
We were together all the time you are doing your farming work
Ajankulu mokulu why did you curse us now
When you are making your ridges for planting we stand by you
Ajankulu mon kulu why did you curse us now
When you are harvesting your corn we also assist you
Ajankulu mon kulu why did you curse us now.
We were together when you are harvesting your sorghum
Ajankulu mokulu why did you curse us now.
Is only when you having sex with your wife that, we said we are
not involved so you can enjoy yourself.

Personal Healing through Egbe

I had a significant introduction to Egbe by discovering a mass in my breast. Concerned that it might be cancer, I got a Divination done. The reading came out that Egbe may help. I appealed to my Egbe Orun with an offering and within hours of the offering heard a response. I had taken an afternoon nap and fell into a dream where

I saw a illuminated woman in white coming towards me. She was incredibly refined in manner, wore all white , and was kind and gentle in character. She said she had received my prayer request and reviewed my situation. At the time, I was a full time caregiver for my grandmother. I couldn't afford to be sick as well. She noted what I was doing and said she was removing the issue from me. After that, the mass disappeared and I have had no other problems.

My personal experience in this matter is what made me understand the greater role Egbe plays in our lives and how they can help and even heal in a situation. It also lends itself to the understanding that nothing happens in the material realm without first happening in the spiritual realm. Through work in the spiritual realm, things in the physical can be healed and resolved. I cannot say how it was done. Perhaps just as that experience may have manifested, whatever created it in the spiritual realm was removed by her and it impacted my material body by dissolving the mass. Whatever happened, the situation was healed.

Egbe are not just our personal friends however. . Egbe also encompasses some very highly evolved beings in the spiritual realm. Egbe are organized into spiritual groups, clans, or associations called Alaragbo. Even Orisa are a part of Egbes. Baale Olubunmi Egbelade indicated in his work, Egbe: The Sacred Tie that Binds that Irunmole, the advanced beings of light that are the progenitors of this world created the Egbes. Egbes are many and tied often to aspects of nature such as water, trees, stones.... Then the Irunmole created the Orisa who become the governors of this world via their aspect of nature within their Egbe. Egbe is what determines what each Orisa will do and their assigned positions. Then we become a part of the Egbe as well.

In some circumstances, a person may bypass Orisa altogether and

work more directly just with Egbe or initiate into Egbe instead of Orisa. It is understood that not everyone is supposed to be an Orisa priest. Many people are stronger just because of the Egbe they are a part of. Since the Orisa are also part of the same Egbe, people can appeal to the Egbe and bypass the Orisa. Some Egbe may be associated with water. Others with trees and Forests. Others may be associated with roads or paths. Some are significantly evolved while some may be decidedly “devolved”.

Oko Orun /Aya Orun - Heavenly Spouses

Just as this world have those who would support us, they also have those who would challenge us. It is no different with some Egbe. Sometimes, we make agreements in Orun that is difficult to keep here in Aye. Or, we have relationships in Orun that are challenged when we incarnate on Earth. Some may include a spiritual husband(Oko Orun) or wife (Aya Orun). This is a difficult concept to grasp here because it creates a situation where the one who has incarnated finds it difficult to attract a partner in the world of the living. Coming to Earth makes us forget who we were in Orun but the partners we have in Orun have not forgotten. Sometimes, they create problems for their spouse on Earth by preventing any relationship from thriving.

The person on Earth may encounter strange occurrences where any relationship attempt just doesn't work out. They may be very attractive but an aura is projected around them that keeps potential mates away or creates difficulties. Or even if they do marry, it fails or the mate dies. Because the mate in heaven is spiritually more powerful, they can influence the situation from behind the scenes. It may even appear to be unconscious and coming from the partner on

Earth or the potential partner on Earth. Maybe someone who is never satisfied and always finds problems with any potential person. It may be they give off the impression that they are off limits for some reason.

Often when a person has a heavenly spouse, the one on Earth may have dreams about the one left in heaven. The dreams may be of them having sex, a deep loving bond with someone, doing things together or a domestic situation with them. The dreams may be blissful...but they are not here on Earth. It can begin to cause problems because they dream of a bliss they can't have on Earth.

Because this situation is complicating, it generally involves going to a priest to discern first if this is the case. All instances of having difficulty finding a mate is not due to having a spiritual husband. Some however, are. I've found that this phenomenon is addressed differently in different ethnic groups. In African Vodun , for instance, it may involve an initiation that is a marriage to that spirit. Taboos would then include that one day a week, they cannot have sex as that day is designated to their spiritual spouse. This may create an equitable situation for both to co exist. In Yoruba, it is often handled through appeasement to the Egbe, initiation to Egbe , or some kind of rearranging the contract between the two. It may also involve a willingness to detach from the spiritual spouse. Many times the dreams of the spouse are very enjoyable and the person is hesitant to disconnect from the love bond they share in the dreamworld. The person may be advised to not speak of them or give any energy to the experience as a means of cutting it off. The solution may vary and it will depend on the Divination that will determine how to resolve so that the person can have a loving partner on Earth.

Abiku

Another challenge that may come up with Some aspects of Egbe is Abiku. Abiku are souls that come to Earth but die young. Abiku means born to die. It is this reason, Egbe shows up strongly through children. Children are the closest to Egbe because of their innocence as well as them being able to “remember” and see more of the world they just left. Children who have “imaginary” friends are often seeing their playmates from heaven. The encounters may be innocent enough and many people “outgrow” the interactions as they become more grounded in this world.

Still others, experience a deep longing to go back home...and this creates problems. It also may be that the soul only agreed to stay for a short while for its own reasons. Or they may come back several times through the same parents dying early each time. Situations like sudden infant death syndrome or congenital conditions may be explained this way. Culturally, this would be experienced as torturing the mother or parents because they are losing their children repeatedly. The grief is overwhelming. This is one of the reasons, when a child is born, they are taken for Divination to determine any soul contracts or agreements that involve the child having problems. They are then able to know solutions to stop it or prevent reoccurrence.

It may also be that these souls may agree to stay longer than childhood by leave as young adults or before having had a full life. Some souls may agree to come to enjoy themselves or achieve greatness early, then leave. This may have been the case with certain famous musicians who tend to die earlier than expected. Or they may make agreements to leave if they take a wrong direction or live a lifestyle that won't allow them to fulfill their original purpose for coming. The circumstances can vary but but all involve a situation

dealt with through Egbe.

Through Egbe, sometimes these soul contracts and agreements can be renegotiated and modified. This can allow the person to have a full life on Earth or one where they are able to marry or have positive lasting relationships. Egbe shows up most prominently in children while in their formative years.

Other situations that may require Egbe

- ❖ Children experiencing difficulty getting along with others or making friends.
- ❖ Being bullied or mistreated by others
- ❖ Depression or crying for no known reason.
- ❖ Children with special gifts and talents that need to be cultivated
- ❖ Difficulty learning how to be comfortable in their own skin, self esteem, and self acceptance issues.
- ❖ Nightmares or dreams of engaging in sex with someone.

Egbe and Autism

- Autism is a modern condition often identified in children in the west and is called Autism Spectrum Disorder or ASD. It is considered a developmental disorder that affects communication and behavior with many of its symptoms appearing by the age of two. It is considered a spectrum disorder because there is a wide range of symptoms associated with the experience and it can significantly impact the person's ability to function. While it is more easily detected in children, it can be found in any adult. While more research needs to be done on the implications of how this condition may show up through Egbe, it is a likely cross over of how it may be interpreted in the West as Egbe

and how it may be interpreted in Ifa as Egbe. This is especially because many of the symptoms are similar. However in an indigenous community in a different culture, it may show up as one way while in a western culture it may show up differently. This may also be the case with children diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder as well. Some symptoms associated with ASD are:

- Difficulty communicating and interacting with others
- Repetitive behaviors or obsessions with certain interests
- Difficulty functioning in school or other areas of life.
- Lack of interest in following conversations directed at them and difficulties in back and forth conversation
- Difficulty understanding the other person's point of view.
- Difficulty adjusting to change of routine

These are just some symptoms that may or may not be present with children who are autistic. It will be helpful to go to a priest trained in Egbe issues to discern if this may be the case if you have a child also diagnosed or you suspect of having Autism. If it is in fact Egbe, there may be a solution through Ifa. Sometimes, the receipt of a consecrated Egbe shrine is necessary. Sometimes full initiation into Egbe is.

Kinds of Egbe Clans or Classifications

There are numerous classifications of Egbe. Each has its own characteristics, expressions, and purpose. These classifications may be based on its associations with places in nature such as water or rivers, trees, as well as its members position in society or the work they do. The Egbe associations you may be a part of may influence your personality and attitude. Some Egbes can produce traits of

leadership, while others may make you more talkative. You may belong to several Egbes that influence you.

Common Egbes known in Ifa include but are not limited to the following:

1. **Iyalode** - mostly associated with prominent women but can include males. Iyalode implies leaders of great influence. Included with Iyalode are Iyalaje - Mother of Wealth, Iyampo- related to Female Reproductive System, Iyamokun-Related to the Ocean, Iyamosa related to lagoons.
2. **Eleeko** -Associated with characteristics of Esu and opening doors to wealth as well as exposing truth. Confers great intelligence and multiple personalities at different times and resourcefulness.
3. **Jagun**: Warrior class that can consist of males and females. Quick tempered, aggressive but can be protective.
4. **Asipa**: Enigmatic, arrogant, communicative but also Associated with poor memory and being secretive.
5. **Baale**- prominent male who tend to be compliments of Iyalode on mostly males. May be rulers or administrators.
6. **Olugbogero** : Associated with Abiku and free flowing rivers.
7. **Adetayanya**: Associated with refuse dumps and can be very stubborn but also wealthy. The trash is never without donations.
8. **Aluku Laka** : Associated with issues of speech and communication
9. **Moohun**: Female Egbe associated with women. Considered procrastinators or slow to act or respond. Also considered hard headed and luxury seeking,
10. **Ogiyan**:- Associated with combativeness and aggression.

11. **Aniwura** : Spiritual power connected to jewelry, beads and fashion. They are musical and industrious but will achieve their goals by any means necessary.
12. **Ajisafe** - Similar to Aniwura
13. **Alesinloye** : Associated with strong winds and heat
14. **Amori Apa**: Can be wasteful
15. **Deji** : Associated with Twin
16. **Irekere**: A Female egbe Associated with Abiku

Making an Offering to Egbe

The reasons one may need to secure an support to Egbe may vary widely. If general support is requested, it may be enough to make a simple offering as indicated below. If a more serious case is the matter, such as Abiku or Spiritual spouses, it is advisable to go to a priest who understands Egbe and have them divine to ascertain the necessary steps for specific outcomes. Special rituals may need to be done or an official shrine may be needed.

For general offerings, Egbe offerings are traditionally at the base of a Banana tree where it's shrine would be located. Ideally one would plant a banana tree or plant near their home. This may not be available in some areas so at the base of a large tree can be substituted. Other places may include beside a river or sometimes even a refuse area. Obi divination may help you determine what is appropriate in the beginning. For our purposes however, we will use a tree.



Consecrated Egbe Shrine with a banana plant- Often under a banana tree.

Egbe offerings often include sweets, fruits especially bananas, cakes, pies, snacks, etc.

Other traditional offerings may include but are not limited to are:

honey

sugar cane,

ekuru (a bean made from black eyed peas and boiled in banana leaf).

Moin moin (similar to above only with tomato, and pepper added)

Peanuts or Peanut butter

Kola nut

Once the offering items are secured and you have found a tree you want to use. The offering can begin.

Place the offerings on a plate or in a clay pot if possible.

If using snacks, take the wrappings off and place them on the offering vessel.

Next, you may use one of the above Odu Ifa verses in this chapter or you may use this one or more of these:

Odu Ifa Owonrin Ogbe

Egbe koni gbe Ile aye

bi ko ba si ti enikeji Egbe lorun

A difa fun ara Orun

A bu fun araye

Opolope Egbe Orun

Ni ko je ki Degbe aye o jiya.

Translation

Earth will be uninhabitable for Egbe

If not for assistance of replica of Egbe in heaven.
Cast ifa Divination reading for heavenly mate
Also perform ifa divination reading for Earthly mate
It for the sake of replica of Egbe in heaven
That doesn't allow Egbe his Earthly replica to suffer.

Egbe oga ogo
Alabelenu a n sasi
Atelesin tele
A po Jojo bi erupe
Borokini ode Orun ti ki je ki ti aye o te
Nitori lagbaja omo lagbaja
Ni a se pe yin
E wa je ki o sese

Translation

Heavenly mates the great ones
You with umbrella under wish people seek solace
You that the affluent people touch your path
You are plenty like sand
The heavenly mates who prevent disgrace of their counterpart on
Earth.
We invoke you because of (Your name) (The son or daughter of
your mothers name)
Let everything done for (me) or (this person) be effective.

It is advisable that you continue with your own prayer. Explain your situation and what concerns you have. Express what you need in terms of support. Ask for help.

Then place the offerings under the tree.

Eat a small bite of the offerings as if to share in it together. Afterward, you may want to Divine with Obi to determine if the offering was accepted as indicated in the chapter on Obi Divination. Once accepted, it is helpful to sit still for a bit of time in meditation and reflection. There may be an insight or you may become aware of a response. In any case be more mindful of your dreams for the next few days to notice responses from there as well.

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Iya Abiye Fayomi Falade , Personal Instruction And Teaching

Chapter 11

Being in Ire through Ewe, Akose, and Sacred Works

The goal of Ifa is to ultimately help you to evolve but also improve the quality of your life. When you have your needs met , this is considered being in ire. Ire means blessings. Some forms of ire are longevity victory over obstacles, , good health, prosperity, good marriage or life partnership, children or a good legacy, and peace of mind. Things that are considered misfortune are sickness, death, conflict, losses, difficulty making progress, etc. Ifa divination is superb at problem solving and bring ire into your life. There will often be a prescription to address whatever disharmony there is. But there are works you can do yourself to support your process. This is through the use of akose and Ewe.

Ifa utilizes sacred works and spiritual technologies derived from nature. Nature has the medicine for the mind, body, and the soul. Isele practitioners utilize nature in the form of Akose which is a

method of incorporating specially prepared natural materials with prayers to produce desired effects and make changes in your life. These can involve the use of leaves, roots, flowers, oils, extracts, powders, soaps, balms, baths and so much more.

Herbs also known as Ewe is the foundation of the tradition. It is helpful for practitioners to develop a good knowledge based of the use of herbs. if possible to grow those that are most used. It is also important to get to know the herbs that grow naturally in your area. These are often mistaken as weeds. We should keep in mind that one person's weed is another persons medicine. We should also keep in mind that nature tends to grow whatever we need very near to where we live. While many practitioners utilize specialized African herbs, we must also be aware that many versions of those herbs grow in the diaspora. In addition many substitutes can be found in the diaspora. It may be even helpful to plant an herb garden. We have an herb garden with over 300 herbs for medicinal as well as spiritual medicines.

This chapter is dedicated to offering practical recipes and personal rituals for empowerment and support for your life.

Guidelines for using herbs

When picking herbs please be mindful of the following. It is helpful to sing or say prayers when picking herbs for sacred or medicinal use. Plants are alive and can be programmed by our words. It is also important to have pure mind while picking to “listen” for the plant. We use some special incantations in the tradition, but simple prayers can suffice for a novice.

Avoid attempting medicine to hurt others. Protection medicine is

fine but works designed to create harm can often backfire. Likewise, works designed to manipulate people into loving you are often wrought with many problems. Strengthening a relationship is one thing, but trying to force another into one against their will is another. The need to do this is a general result of low self esteem and emotional woundedness. It is much better to use sacred work for that than to manipulate others to hide your insecurities.

Lastly, when we go into nature to seek for herbs, leave a small offering in the ground as payment. And never take all there is. Leave some for others and for nature to replenish. We take from nature, we must give some of value back to maintain balance.

Omi Ero

Omi ero is a base herbal solution that is used by Ifa Orisa practitioners for sacred use. Omi ero consist of the words Omi (Water) and ero (cure) meaning water cure. It traditionally refers to the fluid that comes from a snail which is renowned for its healing properties. When it is infused with herbs, it makes a powerful medicine. Omi ero in general is an herbal solution that can be used to consecrate items, to spiritually cleanse spaces and people and tune people into a specific energy. Its preparation involves securing a bowl of water with some fresh herbs. The purpose of the Omi ero will determine the specific herbs to use. Once the herbs are secured, place them in the water and begin to squeeze and tear them into tiny pieces. You will also wring them and rub them together like you would a washcloth until the water turns green from the chlorophyll. The longer stems from the leaves can then be removed if they haven't already.

There are chants that accompany the squeezing of the herbs. Certain plants have certain invocations or words of power to wake up the plant to be used for spiritual or medicinal purposes. Each Orisa has

their own herbs and plants so the purpose must be specific. While you are squeezing and wringing you will also be singing a chant to Osanyin. Osanyin is the orisa that governs plants and herbal medicines

The following is a sample of a chant to Osanyin:

Oriki Osanyin

Iba Osanyin

Praise to the owner of herbal medicine

Iba oni ewe

praise to the owner of leaves

Angberri, ewe gbogbo kiki oogun

The supernatural one, one-who-turns-all-leaves-into-medicine

Agbenigi, oromodie abidi sonso,

One who is versed in the use of roots, one who has a sharp, pointed tail like that of a chick,

Esinsin abedo kinnikinni,

One who has a liver as crystal clear as a fly's

koogo egoro irin,

One who is as powerful as an iron rod,

Akepe nigba oran ko sunwon, tiotio tin, ogba aso okunrun ta giegie,

One whom people appeal to when things are bad, the extremely slender one who, in curing, snatches the clothes of illness and staggers.

Okùnrin gbogbó, dá nkan dá nkan.

The powerful one who commits crimes.

Elésè kan tí ó lé elésè méjì sáré.

The one - legged man who puts two - legged men to flight.

Àròni já sí kòtò dì oògun máyà.

Aroni, who jumps into a pit with charms tied on his chest.

ASE

Another song or chant for Osanyin may be this simple one.

Ewe inje
Oogun inje
Osanyin elewe mi
Ewe wa fun mi
L'ase ewe o

Herbal remedy
Medicine remedy
Osanyin Spirit of the Leaves
Make the leaves available to me
May we have the ase of the leaves.



Making Omi Ero

Flower Water - Florida Water

Florida water is a generic term used in the diaspora to clear and freshen space and uplift the energy of a room. It was originally called Flower Water but came to be known as Florida water due to a specific brand. The brand is water, fragrance, alcohol and coloring that actually has no spiritual value at all. But because scent is connected to the mind, people associate it because of the use in ritual and ceremony. Some take the original bottle and doctor it up with dried oranges, rose petals, cinnamon, bay leaves, and cloves to make a potent solution. For those that wish to make their own version, below is a recipe.

Oil of Lemon, Lavender, Lemongrass, and cloves

Boiled or distilled Water

Orange peels

Rose petals

Alcohol (use perfumer's grade or Everclear - NOT rubbing alcohol!), 4 gallons

Distilled water, 1 gallon.

Mix and bottle, let sit for 2 weeks before use.

Spiritual Bath Rituals

Spiritual bath rituals can be the single most transformative effort you can do for yourself. Whether for cleansing, attracting, repelling, or just relieving they can help to reset your spiritual balance. Spiritual Baths can be taken 2 different ways.

1. One way is to immerse yourself in an herbal or flower solution in your bathtub. You may include scented oils, candles, and sacred music aligned with the purpose for the bath.
2. The other way is shower first and clean the general grime of you. Then pour the herbal bath over you after you are finish as a rinse.

You will then air dry and go to bed in fresh clean sheets.

Taking the Bitter with the Sweet

Bitter baths are baths that repel negative energy and remove spiritual toxicity. It can also be used to release painful situation from your life such as illness, bad luck, grief, psychic attacks, relationship or financial problems. It consists of herbs that may be used for this purpose. After a bitter bath, you may need to take a sweet bath. Sweet baths are used to attract the things you want.

Bitter Bath

Ingredients

Rue

Wormwood

Dandelion

Nettle

Chickweed

Hyssop

Vinegar

Salt

This bath will be taken at night. If you have fresh herbs, you can prepare the ingredients like Omi Ero. If you do not have fresh herbs but dry ones, you can steep them in hot water and strain when finished. While steeping you are praying in the water for what you want released. Ideally, you can take a quick shower first to get the daily grime off of you. Then you can run a bath in a clean tub. You will pour the bath in the tub and sit inside. Allow yourself space and time to release what has been bothering you. Release sadness, release pain, hurt, stress, trouble... Cry if you need to. Sing if you need to. Just release. Sit for 30 minutes. Once finished, take a cup of the bath water and put it to the side. As you emerge from the tub allow yourself to air dry. Then take the cup of left over bath water

outside and pray once more for the release of whatever is challenging you. If you have a back door, then use the back door. Face your door take the cup and throw the contents behind you away from your door. Then without looking back go inside and go to sleep. You will do this 3 times in total. Once every other night.

Following the Bitter Bath is the sweet one. Now that you have released what doesn't serve you or what was bothering you, now you want to get clear on what you want in your life. Love, wealth, peace of mind, etc.

Ingredients

Angelica

Cinnamon (Herb not oil)

Vanilla extract

Parsley

Wild lettuce

Basil

Mint

Milk

honey

Yellow flowers

This bath will be taken in the early morning. You will prepare the sweet herbs just as you did the bitter herbs. Prepare your bath just as you did the bitter. This time you will pray for what you want to attract and bring into your life. Visualize yourself having exactly what you want and being happy. Embrace love, prosperity, good health, joy, etc. Sit in the water for 30 minutes. Get out of the bath and scoop a cup of the bath water out with you. Air dry. Then take the cup of bath water to the front of the house. Pray one last time and pour in the front . Back into the house this time and give thanks for blessings already received. You will take this bath 3 times just like the bitter bath.

Purification Bath

A white bath is used to cleanse, purify, and lighten your energy. It can be used as a means to align your spirit to peace and light.

Rain water

Coconut Water

Efun

Ground Eggshell

Several different white flowers

Plain white soap like ivory

Combine ingredients except soap. Ideally place under a full moon to charge.

Wash first with soap and rinse. Wash hair as well. Follow up with herbal solution rinse over head and body. Allow to air dry.

Cleansing Bath

This cleansing bath can remove negative energy off of you. If you have found yourself around a negative environment and feel in a bad mood yourself, you can take this bath to help you.

Ingredients:

Coffee grounds

Salt

Efun or Cascarilla

Add ingredients to a tub of water. Immerse yourself in the water for 20 minutes. While in the water, pray to be released of any negative influences around you or in your life. Do not stay longer than 20 minutes because it has a tendency to really draw out energy and make you feel drained.

Spiritual Soaps

Soaps can do the same as baths but can be preserved longer. Black

soap is a traditional soap used by practitioners to infuse medicine in. It can be softened just by letting it set in water . Once softened, you can add special herbs to it according to your purpose. Priest use special chants with divination powder along with herbs and sometimes animals to make soaps. You can make some basic soaps here with some simple ingredients.

Soap for Spiritual Protection while Sleeping

This soap is good for people having nightmares and disturbed sleep. Ground onion and basil leaves together. Infuse into some black soap until it is mixed up. Let it dry. The soap can be used until the nightmares stop or use as needed.

Heal Sadness and Bring Joy

Take Mustard flower ground into soap or infused in water. Chant the following and bath with it.

Orisa Oke to se Idunun
Orisa Oke ohun na se Ibanuje
Fun day Orunmila
Won ni ki O rubo Ayo
Won ko if tiun was eban Ibanuje
Ati Awo ati Isegun
And me egba
And I Atorin
I wa bani le Ibanuje what
Ati Awo ati Isegun
And me egba
And I Atorin
E wa bani le irewesi lo
Ati Awo ati Isegun

And me egba
And I Atorin
E wa bani le airoju lo

Translation

Orisa oke (God) that create Joy
Is the same Orisa oke (God) that create sadness
This was Ifa's message for Orunmila
He was advised to offer ebo for Joy
Both the Awo (Ifa priest) and Isegun (herbalist)
Bring your switches
Bring your cane
Help us chase away sadness
Both the Awo (Ifa priest) and Isegun (herbalist)
Bring your switches
Bring your cane
Help us chase away depression
Both the Awo (Ifa priest) and Isegun (herbalist)
Bring your switches
Bring your cane
Help chase away troubles

To remove spiritual blockage

Guinea Pepper
Water lotus
Basil
Honey
Pound every thing together . Add to softened black soap.

To increase Ase and effectiveness with Prayers

Chew Atare or guinea peppers before saying prayers or while saying prayers. 7 for women and 9 for men. Can add gin and spray

Ancestor area or area with Egbe.

Get Rid of Negative Coworker or Unwanted Guest

Gather some black pepper and pray into it that you wish for the named person to go. Let them find something or somewhere else for them to be far from you. Then sprinkle it on their seat, in their office or where they sleep.

To get messages in Dreams

Mugwort

Basil

Rosemary

Yarrow

Lavender

Steep into a tea. Take before bed while praying to receive a message about whatever you want to know about.

Water Blessing Prayer

Can be used with herbs or by itself as you are preparing water to bath in.

Obara Meji:

The dew washes the human head neatly

Neatly the dew washes the handle of a cutlass

If awo's destiny is bad he gets easily fed up

Performed Ifa for Orunmila, father of Agboniregun

When he wanted to go and wash away the destiny of poverty

I washed away poverty

I washed away suffering

I entered inside water

I washed away poverty

ase

Enini ni we ori eda da tori tori
Perepere ni enini nwe eru ada
Bi Ori awo ko ba sunwon nse ni nte awo
A difa fun Orunmila ba a Agboniregun
Baba nlo ree re oriise nu
Mo we se o
Mo we ya nu
Mo bo nu omi
Mo we se nu o
ase

General Prosperity

Dig a hole in the ground. Take a Yam and some eggs and place in the hole. Add honey to it.
Say this chant over it.

He, who shines light on aje (wealth)
is what we call Ifa He, who disperses people
so he may kill a lion (ekun)
Is the name we call Esu Odara
Mother of Children (Iyaami) who uses spiritual eye (mystical power) To take home money from diverse sources,
Is the name we call the mothers (awon iya wa, eleiye aje)
He, who shines light on aje (i.e. money, financial blessings) in my path,
So I may be blessed with love and lots of money
He, who disperses people so he may kill a lion is the name we call Esu Odara
Esu Odara, let me meet with good people
Who would in turn love and bless me,
And direct me in the right path of honest money or livelihood
So that I may in turn have enough to take care of my responsibilities

Mother of Children, who uses her spiritual eye (mystical power)
To take home money from diverse sources, that is you
The Mothers (Awon Iya Wa) Mothers,
wherever IRE of money might be,
Shine your mystical power there
So that the people (employers, clients) may reach for me (consider
me for)
So that they, the people, may in turn love and bless me with the
abundant IRE of money
So that they may care for me
And handle me with the good offer of employment (or business)
Because Fowl's eggs must be handled with care
Handle me with care
Cherish me Lead me to the domain of aje (financial success, wealth)
Make me prosperous
Of all of the sweet tastes in the world, none surpasses your honey
Eji Ogbe, you are primal in Ifa
Bless me with Ire, etc Ase

Speak your personal prayers into the Earth pit with offerings. You
are asking Onile, Mother Earth to accept your prayers. Spray with
gin and cover up.

Alternative is to go to a crossroad with kola nut and palm oil. Walk
around counter clockwise 3 times while saying this chant. place the
kola nut in the middle. Make a circle around it with the palm oil.
Spray some gin on top. Go around the items again stating what your
wishes are .

Special Ewe in Ifa

Ewe Odundun- Around the World – Can be used for special
blessings.

Tete – Wild Spinach- Amaranth- For Success and good health

Abamoda- Leaf of Life – To manifest wishes

Peregun- For wealth

Atari- Alligator peppers -chew while praying to increase potency of prayer.

Efun – Efun is a chalky substance that is used for cleansing and protection. It is made of Kaolin clay. It can be applied to the body as a form of protection.

Eyin (Eggs) Cleansing and Protections

African tradition hold eggs as a spiritual force. An egg is the beginning of life and also offers a protective shell. It holds the lifeforce of a hen or rooster. The eggshell can be made into a protective powder. Some in the diaspora may call it cascarilla powder and it is used like Efun. You can purchase it in a botanika but it is just as effective, if not more to make it yourself . You simply collect eggshells in a bag until you have a good supply. The shells are to be crushed by hand or by blender until they are made into a fine powder. This powder can be compacted with a little water into a paper cup or mold and used like chalk. Placing on our face and or body offers protection of our energy centers on the body. You may place some on your forehead between your eyes or above your eyes like eyeshadow. Or, you may use it to mark and protect your sacred space. This can be used directly on the face with water for protection. The powder can also be added to cleansing and protection baths.

Egg ritual 2. Take a whole uncooked egg and circle it around your entire body starting with the crown. As you move the egg, touch on all of the spiritual centers on the body as well as on each joint like shoulder, elbows, hips, knees, etc. When you finish, take the egg to a crossroads and throw it. Or take the egg to a tree and throw it on to the tree to crack it.

Get out of Jail

Dirt or Yangi crumbs from an Esu shrine (Alternative: red brick powder or powder from a crossroad.)

Sand/ Dirt from off of a cutlass that has been used.

Sand or Dirt from a hoe that has been used.

7 seeds of alligator pepper

Grind all of the above together and into a powder.

Put some in your left palm.

If you know how to imprint Iwori Meji , then do so on the left palm. If you do not, skip that step.

Use the chant below to speak over the powder in your left hand.

Okò ti inu Okò de

Okò fi para se Ile

Ada ti Okò bo

Ada sun lodede bohunbohun

Difa fun orunmila

Lojo ti baba n lo da omo oloro sile ninu ewon

Woni orunmila ko ni le da sile

Orunmila bi o ba se bi ise ti ohun ni, ohun yio da sile.

One Orisa Nla ohun lo ni emi

Ati Oso ati Aje

Gbogbo won ni ki won parapo, ki won lo da omo oloro sile
iwori meji o

Iwo ni ki koo ba wa woo wa

ki won da omo oloro sile oo

A o wure ki won da lagbaja omo lagbaja sile.

Translation

It is the hoe that return from the farm

And made the corner of the house its abode

It is the cutlass that return from the farm

And slept soundly and comfortably in the parlor

Ifa divination was performed for Orunmila

On the day he was going liberate the child of wealthy from

captivity

They scorned Orunmila that he will not be able to liberate him.

Orunmila retort if it is according to my previous deed, I will liberate him

He said Orisa nla is the owner of all heads

Let all the wizards and witches

Gather themselves together

They should go and set free ororo 'child from captivity

Iwori meji I call upon you

You are the one who should go and settle and resolve the pending matter at hand

So that ororo' s child will be liberated.

We will pray that (the name of the person in captivity) son or daughter of (name of the mother of person) will be freed. Add to it with your own personal prayers for their freedom.

You will then use air from your mouth to blow the powder away from your left hand three times. Ideally this is done in front of the jail where they are being held.

To Win a Court Case

For when someone is wrongly accused or implicated into a situation and you need to be vindicated.

Chew 7 alligator peppers

Hold a Jalup root or High John the conqueror root in your hand.

Chant the following words into your hand holding the root

Ojo ti mo ti de Ile aye

Mi o ni kinikini omo enikeji mi ninu

Ohun lo difa fun Aferemojo

Ti yoo dubule ejo

Ebo ni won ni ko waa se

Aferemojo gbo ebo mbe o ru bo

Oni bi Isu ba ta tan
Isu a gbe aare re lori
Aferemojo Awo ni yoo ma jaare won
Bi Agbado ba yo omo tan a gbe aree re lori
Aferemojo Awo ni yoo ma jare won
Bi eere baso tan
A gbe aree e re lori
Aferemojo Awo ni you ma jare won
Adiye ni mi mi o ni orokun ejo
Aferemojo Awo ni yo ma jare won
Ela ileke ni mi mi o ni oju a tokunbo
Aferemojo Awo ni yoo ma jare won
Emi lagbaja omo lagbaja ni ki jare esun ti won fi kan mi yi oo.

Translation

Since the time I was born to this world I have never kept malice towards any one
Cast ifa divination reading for Aferemojo
The one who will face contention of litigation
He was instructed to offer ebo(sacrifice)
He complied and offer require sacrifice
He said when ever yam is mature for sacrifice
Yam will exhibit evidence of vindication
Aferemojo Awo will always be vindicated
When maize is mature for harvest
It will always show the evidence of vindication
Aferemojo Awo will always be vindicated
when beans are mature for harvest
It will always display an evidence of vindication
Aferemojo Awo will always be vindicated
I am hen I don't have kneel for litigation
Aferemojo Awo (the initiate will always be vindicated)
A broken beads don't have hole to put thread in
Aferemojo Awo will always be vindicated
I Son /daughter of..... Should get vindicated on this issue

against me.

You will then use air from mouth to blow on the high john root. And in the air. Let the root dry, place it in a red cloth and keep with you in right pocket during legal proceedings.

** If you are an awo and know how to print Ogunda Mosa with Iyerosun, do so on your left palm. Then blow on Root and blow powder off hand.

To Overcome Fear

Find a Thunder stone. (Stone from a place where lightening has struck) Heat up a little palm oil and dab it on the stone.

Chant the following:

Agba Awo aya
Lo difa fun aya
Lojo ti o n sunkun pe ohun o gbo
Aya mi wa gbo keke keke lese obarisa
Oso ki ri aya olobahun mu
Aje ki ri aya olobahun mu
Ki omo araye male kami laya je.

Translation

Agba is a divining ifa priest for chest
Cast ifa divination reading for chest
When he was lamenting he was not bold enough
Am I bold or not
I am bold with the support of obarisa
No one can remove tortoise of his courage
No one can deprive tortoise of his boldness
No human should be able to deprive me of my boldness.
Wipe stone off and keep with you in a red cloth.

Chapter 12

Frequently Asked Questions, Protocols, Initiation, and Other stuff you should know.

The following are answers to frequently asked questions about the tradition and things beginning practitioners should know. Protocols are involved in the tradition as well as culture. Many of these protocols are global meaning they apply across the board in the Diaspora to Africa. Other protocols may apply to local lines, temples, or specific lineages. The following may or may not apply to ones specific lineages so if you are a member of a temple or lineage, it is advisable to ask what applies to your specific lineage.

What is the difference between Initiate, Priests, and Devotee?

The Ifa Orisa faith is maintained through a community of initiates in which individuals undergo certain approvals, initiation rites. Those who have undergone initiation rites are considered Initiates. Those who are considered community priests are required to undergo education and training under the supervision of a mentor in addition to their initiations in order to be considered authorized

priests in the tradition. This training generally lasts for many years.

The following designations and initiation levels tend to apply to people who practice the tradition. Some apply a hierarchy to it. Some do not.

Oba (Ruler-May apply to male or female traditionally but more recently, **Oba Obinrin** applies to Female rules-King/Queen)

Oloye (Chief or any titled individual)

Olori- Royal Child or Spouse of an Oba

Apena/Abiye- Chieftaincy title for heads of Ogboni male/female respectively

Oluwo- Elder Teacher

Babalawo/ Iyalawo/ Yeyelawo/ Iyanifa, Agba Awo- Fully initiated (2 hands) and certified Priest of Ifa who has also undergone training to practice as clergy.

Awo Ifa- Gender neutral title indicating fully initiated (2hands) to Ifa priesthood . May or May not be trained.

Agbamate / Awo Atemaki)/Omo Awo - underwent Itefa /Itelodu initiation but does not practice as a Babalawo/ Iyanifa- Maintains personal shrine only. Also may practices as an Olorisa

Onifa (Owner of Ifa) - A student of Ifa . Can apply to anyone who has an Ifa shrine but most often applied to those who have received only 1 hand of Ifa but are not priest or initiated.

Apetibi- A woman who has received a hand of Ifa or Isode ritual or one who is considered a wife of Ifa or a Babalawo

Awo Orisa/ Olorisha- Fully initiated Orisa Priest

Iyalorisha/ Babalorisa- Fully initiated Orisa Priest who have undergone training to practice as clergy and are mentors to others and have god children.

Iyawo / Kekere Awo - New initiate -under tutelage -literal meaning wife of orisa regardless of gender.

Onisegun /Adahunse - Traditional Healer- Includes Herbalist, Birth Attendants, Iyanu Practitioners, Homeopaths, Naturopaths, Aladura, etc.

Alagba Iya Agba (Grandmother) Baba Agba (Grandfather)- Applied to all Elders by age

Akeko - Student - Member

Aborisa – Devotee Also called Aleyo in Diaspora lineages

Why is Authority so important?

While this book is written for the non initiate. The rituals contained can be done by anyone from beginners to people who just want to incorporate African traditions in their lives. It is important to note however, that it does not authorize a person permission to function as a priest or teacher in the tradition. Authority to do certain things is likened to a license to practice. Authority, is the signature of the transference of Ase and/or ascending power. Authority must be given to you by one who holds that authority. It cannot be self-assumed or self-initiated. Without this authority, one's Ase and permission to work on behalf of others is limited. To perform certain rituals or prepare sacred tools without the authority is considered fraudulent, unethical and can seriously encumber one's spiritual

growth. Any ritual performed by an unauthorized person on behalf of others is considered invalid and the ceremony, preparation or tools are rendered powerless and invalid.

One reason it is important is because unauthorized people can initiate negative effects and unknown effects because they are not trained properly on the precautions or may lack necessary knowledge to be effective. Sometimes there can be dire consequences. It is dangerous for the person doing the ritual, their friends and family around them and to the community at large. Think of someone who has access to electricity but no training in how to channel and use it properly. A person who is properly trained to work with that energy can light up a home. A person who is untrained but tries to can burn the house down or worse kill or be killed.

Another reason is to preserve the integrity of the tradition and to prevent abuse and scams by those taking advantage of those who are uninformed. As in any other profession, we follow a code of ethics and standards of practice in order to ensure quality and a respected role in the community. In order to gain authority to work on others, one must be initiated and trained within their scope of practice and authorization given by one's Oluwo, Or Yeye/Baba Ifa or Baba/Iya Orisa.

Orisa as an Initiatory Tradition

Because nature is available to all, the assumption is that everything in the tradition is available to all. This is not the case. The deeper aspects of this tradition is only found through initiation. Initiation is the process of attunement to an Orisa that unlocks or activates the dormant codes in our dna that are necessary to bring wholeness this lifetime. When one is born, we bring certain gifts and tools with us to help us on our journey. We also came to learn lessons to evolve

and that comes from experiences we have while we are here. Because we come here to learn and experience certain lessons, certain Orisha may be more necessary to carry out our work. It is in this case, initiation to specific Orisha may assist in that purpose. In his way, initiation helps to fill the areas in our lives that need more growth to achieve balance or wholeness. It's important to note that the initiation does not mean that the person is the embodiment of that Orisa. While some may possess natural personality traits commonly associated with a specific Orisa, one cannot determine a person's guardian Orisa through observation of their personality. More often it is that the person needs to learn lessons in that Orisa's area of governance and expertise.

Some who initiate are called to do so because they need healing, protection, spiritual alignment, or personal empowerment. It may be for them, purely a path of spiritual growth, and development. Their work is personal and for the edification of themselves. Others are called to take it further to become community priests, healers, diviner's and clergy through a life of service by serving the needs of the community. With training after initiation, Orisha priests then become specialist in the mysteries of their particular Orisha and can offer the healing and empowerment tools found in their Orisa's mysteries.. In some Diaspora traditions, a person may initiate to only one Orisa which is referred to as their crown. They may receive supplemental Orisa shrines support them though. In Isese, a person may initiate to more than one Orisa because they may require more than one to achieve balance.

Initiation serves as a transformation of consciousness that helps one to transcend their Earthbound reality to a more spiritual one. It is a conference of Spiritual power both through awakening it as well as the transference of concentrated Ase from Oluwo to student. The

Oluwo becomes a vehicle through which that Orisa confers that empowerment to the new initiate and involves spiritual as well as physical conferences and some sacred ewe into the initiates body. The head is formally aligned with the Ori through a specific process. It is also a rite of passage whereby a person makes a formal commitment to the Orisa , the spiritual path, and to the community. It is a communal ritual of acknowledging that the individual has received the legal rites and rituals of that Orisa and can become a suitable representative of them. Within initiation they are required to develop discipline and agree to be accountable to the community and spiritually to the Orisa. The ultimate witness is nature, Onile , and the Orisa themselves.

Self Initiation Does not Exist in this Tradition

It is because of this, self initiation is not acceptable nor acknowledged as a valid rite or status by any Orisa Tradition worldwide. This includes dreams of initiation, perceived initiations from past lives , or self belief that they can do what an Initiate does. While a person may have a dream of initiation or being initiated, the dream , it is often only considered a call to begin the path, not a conference of priesthood rites to the person. This also applies to determining one's Orisa as well. Only a trained priest in the tradition who uses the traditional Divination tools Erindilogun or Ifa) used by the Orisa can determine one's crowning Orisa. It cannot be done through Tarot, runes, other Oracles, general intuition, astrology, or personality typecasting. There are also no "Ori inspired visions" that can tell a person of someone's Orisa. Anyone who advertises as being able to do such and is not a fully initiated priest using traditional methods is considered a fraudster and illegitimate.

Proclaiming Self initiation in any form is considered a grave offense

to the community and Orisa because it often involves a fraudulent attempt to mislead others in the name of Orisa as well as to deflect from the actual discipline and accountability found in the community through traditional lines. Initiation has been a means of a valid rite of passage for tens of thousands of years. New age concepts such as self initiation simply do not apply to ancient indigenous knowledge or practices. Self initiation is to the Orisa Tradition is likened to what McDonalds is to real food.

The same holds true for self teaching and attempting to incorporate Orisa into other traditions such as Wicca or neo pagan European religions. It is considered cultural appropriation and spiritual colonialism to attempt to project Orisa into foreign traditions. Spiritual colonialism is the attempt to project a foreign religious doctrine over more ancient indigenous people's spiritual systems. Just as the land and people underwent foreign rule, religions, and governments that were forcibly projected on Africa by Europe, the same attitude and assumption of privilege is now being projected on the tradition by outside religions. This is vehemently rejected by practitioners in the Orisa tradition whether Diaspora based or African based. Anyone who wished to truly embrace their ancestral tradition from Africa or Orisa, is advised to follow the accepted channels of practice by aligning with an initiated elder who can teach them. If they do not wish to initiate, are not called to initiate, or are not able to initiate, then they can stick with the tools found in this book and work more closely with nature itself.

Initiation was created by the Orisa themselves as a means of transferring their Ase and a means for the community to identify their representatives on Earth. It serves as a protection and a means of preserving the authentic tradition. If one is truly called to the Orisa, you will be given the means and support necessary to follow

that path.

What Can You do as an Aborisa, Non Initiate, or Devotee

Just because the priesthood to Orisa requires initiation does not mean that a person cannot fully embrace the tradition as a way of life and spiritual development. Contrary to popular opinion, not everyone is called to initiate or be a priest. We are, however, called to grow and develop and there are many ways that happens without the process of initiating as a priest. In fact, it is generally perceived as necessary to practice as a non initiate before initiation anyway. This gives one a process of learning the tradition, it's tenants and value as a spiritual path. A non initiate may be called an aleyo (guest) , aborisha (devotee), or akeko (student). This book is mostly designed for the non initiate who wants to begin practice but is not initiated or under the direction of an elder. The tools offered to work with Egun, Ori, Egbe, Divination, and Personal rituals are ideal for this group. Cultivating practice with just these tools are necessary before a person is ready to go further anyway. Mastery of these can often be all you need for your life. As you work with these tools, whatever you need will appear in time.

So what does practicing the tradition of Ifa look like for a non initiate vs an initiated Priest?

An Aborisa , lay practitioner or devotee will focus primarily on spiritual development and cultivation. They will focus on Ori work through regular practices such as meditations, dreamwork, Ebori, spiritual therapies. They will have practices involving shrine work with ancestors, communicating and healing work in the family. Being mindful of the needs of the living family and the dead. They

will embark on Egbe work which will allow them to expand beyond Egun in the spiritual world and into the work with personal guides and peers in the world of Orun. They will divine with Obi and use it as a means of deepening communication and receiving answers from all three ori, Egun, and Egbe. A lay person can also work with Orisa or Irunmole through their natural shrines in nature by giving offerings and saying prayers, meditations, songs and dances for the Orisa. Personal work on ego, personal healing, and Iwa development also fall under work for anyone.

Initiated priest should learn the above first before they can be truly competent Orisa priests. Although many initiated priests are just learning about Egbe as well. Initiated priest have two or three paths they may follow. Work as a community priest where they divine with traditional tools and do Orisa work on behalf of others. They will work for community and general public. This requires years of training in this work before it happens. Personal priesthood where they cultivate a personal relationship with their Orisa and take care of a shrine. They may divine with traditional tools Eerindilogun (16 cowries) or Ifa if they know how for themselves, friends, or family but not general public. Orisa may be their religious path but their work may be in the secular fields of life. They may also work as a traditional healer specializing in the healing arts and or spiritual counseling. Often these paths intersect so these are not always clearly divided.

How do people get started and learn?

For someone born in the tradition or in Africa, they automatically learn the tradition through their culture and family. For many people in the Diaspora, especially those coming from another faith, a process of introduction and learning is required. This helps to

facilitate a smoother tradition to the entire lifestyle.

This book offers a beginning. Taking it further will require the guidance of a mentor who is a priest. Traditionally it would be within a community house called an Ile and in the Diaspora they are referred to as a god parent. The mentorship however can just as well be with a priest on a one on one basis. Distance from a community Ile or compatible mentor are now bridged now through the availability of the internet, video calls and free global long distance lines but personal one on one is still required for certain practices.

What about Lineages?

If you determine that this path is for you, you will eventually find a mentor to guide you more deeply into the work. This is where lineages become important to know. Lineages are the spiritual line that you follow. The God Parent or Oluwo determines the lineage. Lineage can also be determined by specific family , specific towns, or Cultural orientation. When you initiate, you will often take on the name of the spiritual family you initiated under. Its important to do your research about this because often people choose a mentor because they are local or close. It has its advantages in terms of being a part of a community and having direct access to the elder. Everyone is not always compatible though so it serves you to take your time in making such an important decision. In addition, the path you begin with is the one that will direct how you develop in the tradition. In the diaspora of the United States, the most common general lineages are in Isele Lagba also called Esin Orisa Ibile or Lucumi also called Regla de Ocha . Isele is what we covered in this book and related to West African traditional practices. Lucumi is the lineage that came from Africa through Cuba during the slave trade. It is how it was preserved during that time and passed down. It then came to the United States with migrations from Cuba.

There are many heated debates between the two groups as to personal preferences and styles. Some practitioners are very rude and assume their way is the only and best way and all others are wrong or inferior. It is not suggested to get caught up into these pointless battles. Its often just cultural ego and not substantial. Each has its own nuances, pros and cons. It is important that you evaluate your options and choose the one that is right for you. I can assure you that the Orisa are of one mind. Its mostly politics and people that divide.

Many of the differences have already been explained in this text but one more may be concerning women. Women can only be initiated to Ifa in Isele. At least as of this writing in 2020. If this is your path or you have been called via divination and you are a woman, then your initial lineages is already chosen. Although many have, it is very difficult to begin in Lucumi and convert to Isele to become an Iyanifa. From my understanding , it is also difficult to begin as a Isele and convert to Lucumi as well. They often may require whatever initiations you may have had to be repeated to be accepted.

There are also some Lucumi lineages that do not utilize Ifa at all. These are called Ocha centered houses and they focus primarily on Orisa but minimize Orunmila. They are often headed by an Oba Oriate, a position developed in Lucumi to be a master of ceremony for Orisa ceremonies. Other important notes are that Isele, as mentioned does not tend to have the initial procession of ceremonies such as Elekes and Warriors. Another comparison is the work and reception of Ori as well as Egbe. These are found in Isele lineages but not Lucumi so much.

What are all those greetings devotees use?

Greetings are a big deal in Yoruba culture. Greetings and

Salutations in the tradition are called Ikini and follow common protocols found in traditional Yoruba cultures. Different priesthood levels call for different greetings. Devotees are expected to address elders with proper greetings of respect. Colloquial or slang expressions to elders are considered disrespectful. This kind of culture was passed down in the diaspora as well. Elders in African American families would say “put a handle on it” to refer to using a title as a sign of respect such as Mama _____, Mr or Mrs, or say Yes “maam or no sir”. The tradition has even more.

Greetings in Isese are both verbal as well as have physical postures or gestures that accompany them. Each initiation and priesthood has its own greeting.

The general greeting most devotees use around the world is Alafia (Pronounced Ah La Fee Yah) and is a general reference to peace and well being.. When you meet another devotee you cross your arms and touch opposite shoulders on both sides. Some give a return response which is Se (Shay) Alafia Ni? That means peace and how are you? The response from there is Dada Ni which is fine and you? Many just say Alafia. Alafia is actually a Hausa word but became popular nonetheless. Still, there are some who may use the following Yoruba greetings, Ekaaro (Good Morning) , Ekasaan (Good Afternoon) or Ekaale (Good Evening and they are fine as well.

When greeting a Babalawo or an Iyanifa, what greeting is used?

Aboru Aboye Abosise- (pronounced : Ah Boo Roo , Ah Boy Yay, Abo S Shay) the short version of that means and offering has been made. This actually comes from an Odu verse in Ogunda Meji where Orunmila had to speak with Olodumare or Olofin and had to make an offering and greet Olofins daughters women who stood

guard and their names was Aboru , Aboye, And Abosise. Orunmila is said to have married them and now, as a sign of respect for women, requires that anyone coming to see him should first greet his wives. The response from the Baba or Iya would be Ogbo Ato Asure Iwori Wofun or..Ogbo Ato. Ogbo Ato means long life and it implies that the offering has been accepted. Iwori Wofun refers to the Odu that explains the greeting.

When greeting an Orisa priest, what is used?

Orisa priest greetings are often Alafia but formally each priesthood has its own greeting. When Greeting a Baba/Iyalorisa or Olorisa, the greeting is related to their particular Orisa.

The following applies :

Obatala - Eepa (pronounced EE Eh pah) Obatala

Oya - Eepa Iyansa or Eepa Oya Oriri

Yemoja Eepa Omi Ooo or Omi Ooo

Osun- Oore Yeye ooo or Oore Yeye Osun

Sango -Kabeesi

Esu- Ki Esu Gba or Oro Esu

Egbe Akiika Aseege

Ogun- Ogun Yee or O Se Ogun

Onisegun- Oni Sa Segun

Egungun - Ara Orun kinkin

Egbe – Muso Muso

What are the Physical Gesture Greetings?

There is a physical greeting that goes along with the verbal greetings. Kneeling down (women) or prostrating (men) is considered the traditional form of greeting to elders and shrines. For people educated in the West this “lowering of yourself” gesture is kind of rare and feels very strange at the beginning. The ego is triggered as it doesn’t want to appear as inferior to another. The

greeting affirms the concept of humility and to recognize their eldership (experience and wisdom) and or the Orisa crown that they carry. A priest is considered a vessel for the Orisa and so it is also a way of saluting the Orisa they carry. After a few times , it gets normal and the modern, shortened versions make it very easy to follow the Yorùbá etiquette everywhere.

The ground is reflective of Mother Earth and a reference to respect the Earth. The Earth itself is an Ironmole named Ile; who is given the power over all ajogun or evil forces. When a priest whether Olorisa (Orisa priest) or Ifa priest (Babalawo or Iyanifa) leans over the devotee in the dobale (prostrating position) or Ikunle (kneeling), they must give a prayer which now awakens the Earth and as the prayer concludes and the devotee is raised, the Earth removes or absorbs any negativity affecting the person. This is most important for people to understand why we have seniority and the giving of respect to priest and elders for they represent the Orisa on Earth. These greetings are generally standard across Africa and the diaspora so they should practiced wherever you are with another person from the tradition regardless of Ile , temple or lineage affiliation. While these are not only common in Nigeria but expected, these greetings are not usually done in public places such as stores and large events in the West. If you say you are a devotee to a fellow practitioner, you are expected to know and follow the greetings .

Dobale – Male devotes towards elders, elder priest, or royalty
Men either prostrate all the way down to the floor by prostrating or they touch the ground when before an elder. Touching the ground is the standard when in informal situations. In ceremony , full prostration is expected. This is for all elders and priests. The elder or priest will raise them and offer a blessing for them.

Kunle — Female devotees towards elders, elder priests, or royalty

Females kneel down on both knees to greet. Like the half-way prostration, this can be reduced to bending the knees slightly like a curtsy with one leg slightly in front of the other. An alternative may be a genuflection, kneeling down with one knee only, sometimes even without having this knee touching the floor directly. This kind of greeting offers more modesty for women but sometimes females may also do *dobale* at a shrine and roll from right to left.





What are Elekes and Ides?

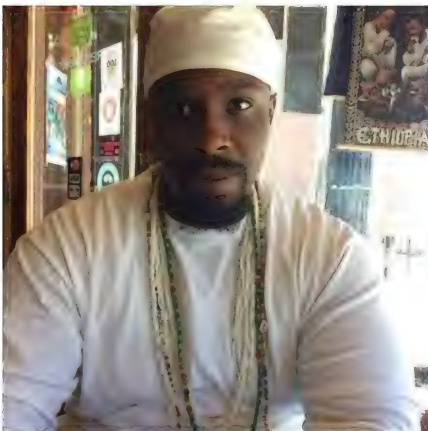
Elekes are a global signature to recognize devotees in the tradition. Elekes are colored consecrated beaded necklaces traditionally associated with specific Orisa and must be given to the person by a priest. Ides are similarly colored bracelets that symbolize the same. The use of beads to denote status derived from ancient times with Olokun . Archeologist found expensive corals, lapis, carnelian and other expensive beads in the Olokun grove in Ile Ife dating back to Elekes or Ides may be received from one of the following:

1. From an initiation to accompany a shrine
2. As a protective talisman given by a priests or recommended from divination,
3. As a part of an Orisa family.
4. As a rite of passage

In the diaspora, an eleke ceremony was created in Lucumi to mark the transition from the secular world into an Orisa tradition through a spiritual family. It consists of receiving several consecrated Orisa elekes at one time from a mentor. Because most people in the west are not born into this tradition, people found it helpful to create a rite of passage for newcomers. This reception served as a link between the receiver and the Mentor and or Ile. It serves as a formal declaration of devotion to the path of Orisa. Their consecration serves as a protection to the new comer.

The Lucumi eleke ceremony giving several Orisa necklaces at the same time is not performed in Africa. However, the giving of elekes as a form of protection and identification of family with certain

Orisa is done. In traditional Isele practice in Africa, elekes are given with the conference of a shrine or initiation and in some cases as a protective amulet prepared by a priest after a Divination has prescribed it. In some areas however, general followers especially within families may wear the eleke of a family Orisa without being initiated. It is conferred to the person by the head of the family or shrine. Isele lineages in the Diaspora vary in opinion about the Lucumi version of the ceremony. Some were initially given this ceremony before converting to Isele. They found value in it and wish to continue that practice as they introduce newcomers to their ile. Some suggest it should not be performed in Isele because it is Lucumi. Others argue that the conferring elekes themselves originally came from Africa and therefore suitable for Isele to use in the capacity they determine necessary. For those Isele that do utilize the ceremony, it acts as a rite of passage and stepping stone in the same way it does in Lucumi. Others wish to hold to more conservative approaches and do not offer such a ceremony.



Baba Okikifa wearing elekes (L) Ifa ide and Iyun coral beads (R)

Common Colors used in Elekes

The Orisa are identified by the colors used in the eleke. Different houses have different protocols as to when someone receives elekes.

The Elekes colors and ceremonies given can change from house to house and from town to town. Many use common colors however.

Eleke Colors and what they designate

All white - Obatala (Called Sese Efun beads)

Blue and white- Iyemoja

Red and Black – Esu (called Ere Esu)

Red- Ogun, Sango, or Oya

Red and white Sango (Kele Sango)

Ogun Green and Black or Red

Orunmila - Green and brownish red or yellow and green (Otutu Opon)

Yellow, white or yellow and green - Osun

Brown and red , maroon, Red, or purple -Oya (called Kele Oya)

Olokun- Blue sometimes with white or red coral (called Okun beads)

Egun elekes – Multicolored

Osanyin- Multicolored

Red Iyun and Blue Segi wide beads- traditionally denotes chieftaincy, royalty

Warriors

Other ceremonies that generally considered a Diaspora or practice are the conference of warriors. This is a reception of Orisa shrines that serve as a greater protection. Often it is Elegba, Ogun, and Osossi. This gives the initiates some tools to work with as they develop discipline in the tradition as well as establish a greater connection with key Orisa such as Esu and Ogun to name a few. It can also offer more protection for the initiate on their path. This practice is not often utilized by Isese practitioners rooted in Africa

either. Although, it too, can vary given the Godparents personal spiritual history and belief. Isele practices may necessitate the need for Esu or Ogun based on personal situation or divination.

Isele practitioners in the Diaspora have often adapted different tools and practices that serve as an introduction to the tradition. While not necessarily done in Africa as an introduction, many Diasporans do recognize a need to transition a person into the tradition through some kind of conferred rite or practice. To that end, the establishment of an ancestor altar serves that purpose. As the tradition is an ancestral one, everyone has ancestors and an ancestral lineage. By establishing a relationship with that lineage, they begin the process of working with them in the invisible realm and facilitating healing in the family. This is considered especially important to descendants who's ancestors may have experienced human captivity. As a formal process, the mentor may confer an Egun ritual vessel or other tools to serve as amplifiers for their ancestors and as a means to create a bridge for them.

Another practice Isele considers as a core practice is working with one's Ori. The Ori is the first and primary Orisa for all and to that end, everyone has one and initiation is not necessary for one to incorporate practices to relate to it. The Ori relates to the head and while the literal head is the main receptacle for offerings to Ori, another tool called an Ile Ori is sometimes offered. The Ile Ori may be a formal beaded or Cowrie covered vessel that holds an icon inside or a calabash. Use of it, as in many things may vary depending on the lineage. Some lineages do not believe it is necessary because we can use our own heads. Other say it is a means to deflect any negative energy that may be coming towards us by diverting it to the Ile Ori instead. Still others suggest that the receipt of a hand of Ifa serves as a representation of Ori because it is called

Oke Iponri meaning outer Ori and is directly tied to destiny.



Ile Ori

What are other common Initiations and

Ceremonial Rites of Passage in Isese

Esentaye

When a child is born, an ancestor has returned from the spiritual world. Traditionally , birth of a child would necessitate a divination

that would determine that child's place in the world along with soul path and life lessons. This would help the parents to guide the child and understand their responsibility toward the child. This ceremony is called Esentaye and welcomes the ancestor returned, determines which side of the family the soul came from and possible who. The ceremony also provides a name confirmation for the child.

Hand of Ifa or Isefa

The reception of a hand of Ifa is given through the ceremony of Isefa. It serves for many as a formal rite to become a student of Ifa. The Orisa is Orunmila. It is NOT an initiation but it does place one under the protection of Orunmila and offers a means of more direct alignment with one's destiny. This ceremony is a two- to three-day process, culminating with the reception of your Birth Odu or Ita – your sacred contract with destiny as you currently experience it. This remains in effect for life unless you fully initiate which is likely to modify it.

Isefa is also received to provide protection, improvement of life circumstances – in essence, to align with our destiny. The person will receive the official icon for an Ifa shrine. Many lineages also give an icon for Esu shrine as well. The presence of this shrine provides the opportunity for its devotee to pray and make offerings to Ifa and Esu. The person also receives an ide which is a bracelet identifying them as under the protection of Ifa. Isefa or Hand of Ifa ceremony is NOT Ifa initiation nor does it qualify you to be able to perform divination for others.

Ikaro or Kase Orisa

The ikaro ceremony is a middle step to full orisa priesthood. It is like one hand of Orisa where the person receives a consecrated vessel of the orisa. It is not Orisa initiation. Kase Orisa is the receipt

of an Orisa shrine .This is often offered for a person who wishes to supplement their life with a particular Orisa or who, divination advises that they receive as supplement in their life. It is not an Orisa initiation but the person becomes the caretaker of an Orisa shrine and official Orisa Devotee.

According to Solomon Omoji Mgbjume , Amoja Yemoja of Ibadan, Ikaro are considered a middle initiation to Orisa much like the hand of Ifa is considered a step but not full initiation.

“The ikaro initiation ceremony is the middle step to full orisa priesthood in the Yoruba orisa traditions of Nigeria, it enables the owner of the ikaro to participate in many activities in the Orisa traditions, he or she can make some ebos either to the Iyami (mothers of the Night or do some blood sacrifice to some Orisa.

The ikaro starts with a visit to a Babalorisa or Iyalorisha who will use the Erindinlogun to divine and know the orisa that governs the head of the inquirer, and after that, an etutu is made on behalf of the inquirer and later if he or she wants to continue further, an ikaro ceremony will be made for him or her.”

This ceremony is not well known in the diaspora but may be an option for some who cannot initiate for one reason or another, but still needs the direct support of the particular Orisa.

Orisa Shrine

The Igba or Orisa Shrine is a miniature embodiment of their Orisa traditionally prepared and consecrated. This is considered the Orisa shrine through which the Orisa inhabits . It differs from an altar which tends to be a collection of items related to a particular divinity or divinities. As a shrine, it becomes a spiritual portal through which

the Orisa actually speaks more than just decorative. Just as most people don't need initiation, most don't need an Orisa shrine either. It requires a certain commitment and level of responsibility to the Orisa it was consecrated for. Instead of a shrine, nature itself becomes the shrine and a non initiate may make offerings in nature at places the Orisa is known to inhabit or represent.

Idosu Orisa Initiation

Idosu is Orisa initiation. The Orisa initiation ceremony initializes a formal and higher relationship with an Orisa by seating the Orisa in the Ori and empowering the person with the Ase of the Orisa. This initiation allows the initiate to study and learn the mysteries of the Orisa as well as learn the medicines and divination for the Orisa. Initiation means to begin...and is not a completion process. The person becomes an initiate by receiving the icon of the Orisa and undergoing sacred processes by which the Ase of the Orisa is conferred to the person. Once this is done, they are an initiate of the Orisa but not necessarily considered a priest. Only training and experience makes one a Priest or priestess.

This ceremony varies depending on the Orisa and the number of days can vary from 3-21 days depending on the Orisa and lineage. This initiation requires that a divination confirm the correct Orisa and the initiation. The potential candidate should demonstrate spiritual maturity and an honorable character before and after the initiation. The potential candidate should have attained some level of emotional balance and responsibility toward oneself and others.

Itefa or Itelodu

Initiation into Ifa (Itefa or Itelodu) is the ceremony that prepares an initiate to become a Babalawo or Iyanifa. It may also be performed

for the purpose of healing or clearing your life to align with your greatest destiny. The itefa ceremony may last 4- 17 days depending on lineage. The full rites can extend to 27 to 90 days. The initiation, once done, may also require additional ceremony over the course of a year to complete. This initiation is not for everyone. Divination should confirm if this is your path. Itefa ceremony is the ceremony performed without Odu. It is called Elegan. It is how the original Ifa initiations were done. The Itelodu ceremony is the ceremony performed with Odu.

Training and Education Requirements for Initiates

Once initiated to Ifa or Orisa, they must undergo a training and apprenticeship in order to practice as a community priest. Initiation alone does not qualify anyone to practice as a priest. One is an initiate. Priesthood requires full training and authorization from one's Yeye or Baba Orisa or Ifa or Oluwo. Everyone is not intended to be a community priest. Many only need a personal Priesthood with the Orisa to support their life. The ita determines their path. If they are called to be a community priest or healer, they must be trained. That training will culminate with an additional ceremony.

What is Ifa Initiation like?

Ifa initiation is different for everyone and can be personal. Some involve large groups of people and others are more intimate and personal. Parts of the ceremony are secret and only known to initiates. I liken it to a resetting and rebirthing process. Also like an awakening of dormant DNA. The process transforms your life but the transformation can be different for each individual. For the most part, people experience major breakthroughs over the next year or 2 after initiation. Other people may experience a kind of detox and major shift that may initially be uncomfortable. Whatever issues that prevented you from manifesting your destiny before will be

confronted and need to be stopped before forward movement can happen. Many times this can be the ego, attitude, or lifestyle that is not healthy for you. These may often come up as taboos. These are things that can create pitfalls for your life so being mindful of them is essential for development. I've found ego and impatience are the greatest impediments to growth. For this reason, it is a very good idea to do self work and personal development prior to initiation. You may even want to get a divination done to determine what you need to work on in order to be ready for initiation. This can stave off many things. But the ego can disguise itself as spiritual ego and trick you into thinking you are further advanced than you are. Patience in your development is essential. Growth is best seen looking back at how far you came rather than where you think you are going. Looking forward too much is like waiting for water to boil.

What is an Ifa divination like?

Many people have had divinations or personal readings with a tarot reader or other diviner. The process for consulting Ifa or Erindilogun is a little different from that. The process of consulting a priest is more like consulting a doctor. It is best for life changes and problem solving rather than simply fortune telling. Ifa oracles come from a higher realm and don't rely simply on intuition to discern a problem. The Irunmole are responding. Orunmila is responding. The inquirer's Ori is responding. So the divination is not ego driven but spirit driven based on your highest good.

To that end, like a doctor, you may present an issue.. and the oracles will discern the root problem. Or, you may be contemplating a major life move, marriage, a job shift, moving, a new relationship... and you want to get some advise on how to get the best results. Ifa and Erindinlogun oracles differ from other oracles because they will

also discern solutions for the problems and specific remedies to ward off or prevent greater challenges. This is through the medicine and work with the orisa directly. Through securing the help of higher beings, your ability to success is enhanced. Ifa can also discern areas or things to avoid like taboos. Things that can reverse your blessings or bring challenges. By knowing potential pitfalls you may be able to avoid them.

Divination in this tradition also is active in that it is not just a mental thing where you memorize meanings. It opens active portals where Ase can be tapped and actively used to impact the other. The energy is activated once the divination is pulled and the ebo is the neutralizer or transformer to create positive change. The ebo is just as important as the divination.

Isese Calendar

The Ifa calendar is over 10,000 years old. According to that calendar 2020 is the 10,062th year. Isese follows a traditional lunar calendar of 4 day weeks and 7 week month. The worship days are on every 4th day cycle in the Ifa calendar. The four days together are called the 5th day and Ose means week. These refer to the market days. The 17th day of the Ifa prayer cycle is called, “Itadogun Ifa Ose”. In most temples of traditional Ifa and Orisa worship the major celebration is on the 17th day however because of the urban nature of our modern societies many use either Saturday or Sunday as a worship day in the Diaspora.

Ose Meji

It breaks into pieces
It cracks into tiny fragments
It is not the practice to paint dry palm fronds with camwood
These were Ifa's messages for Oosanla Oseremagbo
When seeking the hand of Ojose as a wife
He was advised to perform sacrifice
He complied
Obanla, I hereby offer my Ose kola nuts
Today is the Ose day

Iwori Orura

Ifa is the owner of today
Ifa is the owner of tomorrow
Ifa is the owner of the day after
Orunmila is the owner of the four days that Oosa, the
Almighty, assigned to the world
This was Ifa's message for Orunmila
When going to attain the four daughters of Oosa..

Ose Meji explains how Oosa married Ojose and the Ose day was created in honor of her. Iwori Otura explains they had 4 daughters whose names were Oni, Ola, Otunla, and Ireni. The days were named after them: Oni was associated with Obatala, Ola with Orunmila, Otunla with Ogun and Ireni to Jakuta (Sango). The other 401 Orisa chose days aligned with those days.

There is no day that Ori and Esu Odara cannot be propitiated. Any day chosen for the two Irunmole is appropriate for them, although typically, Esu Odara is propitiated along with Orunmila.

The traditional Isese calendar however follows the sequence below:

Ose Ola- Ifa/Esu/Osun/Aje/Yemoja/Olokun

Ose Otunla- Ogun/Osoosi/Orisa Oko/Egbe

Ose Ireni- Jakuta/Sango/Oya/Aganju

Ose Oni- Obatala/Egungun/Iyaami/Sanpanna

Then it repeats.

A up to date calendar can be found at the following link.

<https://www.oritemple.com/ifacalendar.html>

Ifa practitioners that want to do special work for the Orisa can do them any day but the Ose days are the best days for offerings, prayers, meditations, etc.

The traditional calendar is supplemented by a modern one based on the Greco Roman calendar.

Ologbon Otura explains how the calendar was converted to a 7 day week with the following:

Sunday- Ojo Aiku-The day of immortality.

Monday-Ojo Aje-The day of the goddess of riches.

Tuesday- Ojo Isegun-The day of victory.

Wednesday- Ojo Riru The day opens the door and goes out or sacrifice to resolve confusion.

Thursday- OjoBo-The day of the return of the sun to its normal course. It's a day used to call on Ancestors and the day ancestors visit their relatives.

Friday-Ojo Eti-The day of trouble or quarrel.

Saturday- Ojo Aba -The day of three wishes or the day of three wonders.

How Do I Begin to Practice Isese ? Three Pillars Model for the Aborisa in the Diaspora

This entire book has been written to give you a beginning to the practices of Isese. Its purpose is to provide beginners with some tools and practices that they can do that are safe and fundamental for anyone. While many beginners wish to work more directly with Orisa, the fundamentals begin with the three Pillars: Ori, Ancestors, and Egbe. These three pillars offer a concise means of learning and growing until a mentor is found or in addition to your mentorship.

An Aborisa or devotee practice would consist of self development exercises and inner healing. That can begin with mediation practices as discussed in the Asaro Chapter. Meditation allows you to learn how to still the mind to access spiritual guidance from within. Ifa begins with your Ori since your Ori is the key to your destiny. Regular Ebori helps to refreshen your connection with your Ori.

Working with your ancestors help to strengthen your relationship with the ancestral world and secure your first line of defense and support. It assist in unblocking issues from within the bloodline, access family gifts, and heal family challenges. They can also assist in your daily life just as family can.

Egbe is an extension of the ancestral world into your soul family. They can assist with securing even more support and access to guidance in relation to your destiny. They know the agreements you made when you chose to come so they can assist. All three of these supports are with you whether or not you ever initiate. Cultivating a relationship through these means will help improve the quality of your life immensely.

Practicing especially on Egungun and Egbe days in the four day calendar can fine tune you to the energy and help to establish a regular discipline that will move you forward. Utilizing Obi Or Erin can clarify communication with all three. If you know of an Awo who divines , then securing a yearly or quarterly divination can help begin the process of practicing with others and determining a supportive elder. You get to learn more about them and determine if you are compatible. You can use your Obi to determine if they are an appropriate elder for you or not.

Other practices are learning to revere and respect nature. Cultivating a relationship with nature. Learning to hear the voice of nature, the wind, the rain, the sun... These can come by just sitting in nature, walking in nature, and observing nature. The greatest truths of the work has been based on observation of nature. This is where Orisa or rather Irunmole begins.

Dreamwork and journaling is another tool. Spiritual work will enhance your dreams and you may begin to receive messages in your dreams. Learning how your ancestors, ori, and egbe show up in your dreams can further deepen your work. You can use Obi to confirm the source of the messages and if you have accurately deciphered the message. You should have a full journal to document your experiences, lessons, practices, divinations, dreams, etc.

Learning songs and dances of the Orisa can be a rewarding practice as well. The dances help to awaken the Orisa through moving meditative expressions. Through mimicking the Orisa's movement, we tune into them. Songs act as chants as well to awaken. The next book will offer tools to work with the Orisa through natural living and inner cultivation.

Lastly, take your time. Don't push too fast. This journey is a

lifetime one, not a temporary one. So give time to appreciate each step. Don't rush to initiation first because it sounds cool. Once initiated don't rush to trying to be a community priest because of ego or desire to make quick money. Time is your friend not enemy. So take your time.

In closing, this is your beginning. May you all be blessed on your journey to Ifa and the practice of Isese Lagba.

ABOUT OLOYE AYELE KUMARI, PHD



With every initiation comes a new name so some of her names are as follows: Tayese Asee Okungbemi, Ifayele Fasola

She is a Iyanifa and Iyalorisa in the Ifa Orisa Isese tradition. Initiated into the mysteries of Ifa, Olokun, Oya, Obatala, Osun, Yemoja, Egungun to name a few.

She is an Iya Abiye Aborigine Ogboni Worldwide and was appointed Obabinrin Olokun Omilere in the United States (Omilere Alaragbo, Ibadan) through her ancestral Olokun lineage revealed at her Olokun Initiation. She is the Director of Ori Temple of America in St. Louis, Mo and affectionately known as Chief Yele or Chief Yeye to her mentees.

She is an author, professor, and traditional healer bringing over 30 years to her work with a number of degrees , licenses ,and certifications and having taught thousands over the years in the arts of Indigenous knowledge, holistic and conventional healing. She was a professor in Allied Health Sciences for over 15 years at several Missouri colleges. She is a historian on African History and Woman's Traditions. She is available to host retreats, workshops, and events on Ifa, Women's Traditions, and Personal development. Lastly she is a grandmother and devoted wife and mother.

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Other works by Author:

Iyanifa : Women of Wisdom

Magical Calabash: Sacred Wisdom from the African Ancestral Mothers

Spirit Rising : Women's Workbook for Healing and Empowerment

Featured in :

Holy Odu: A Collection of verses from the 256 Ifa Odu with Commentary, by Awo Fategbe Fatunmbi Fasola

Speaking with Spirit by Ra Sekhi Arts Temple

